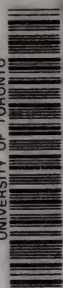


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SONNETS OF THIS CENTURY

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SONNETS OF THIS CENTURY

EDITED AND ARRANGED

WITH A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION ON
THE SONNET

BY

WILLIAM SHARP

Un sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poëme

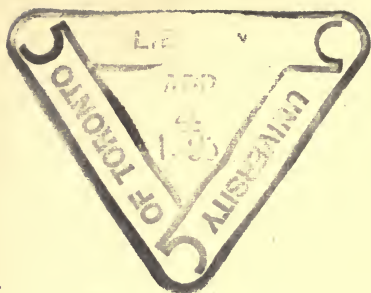
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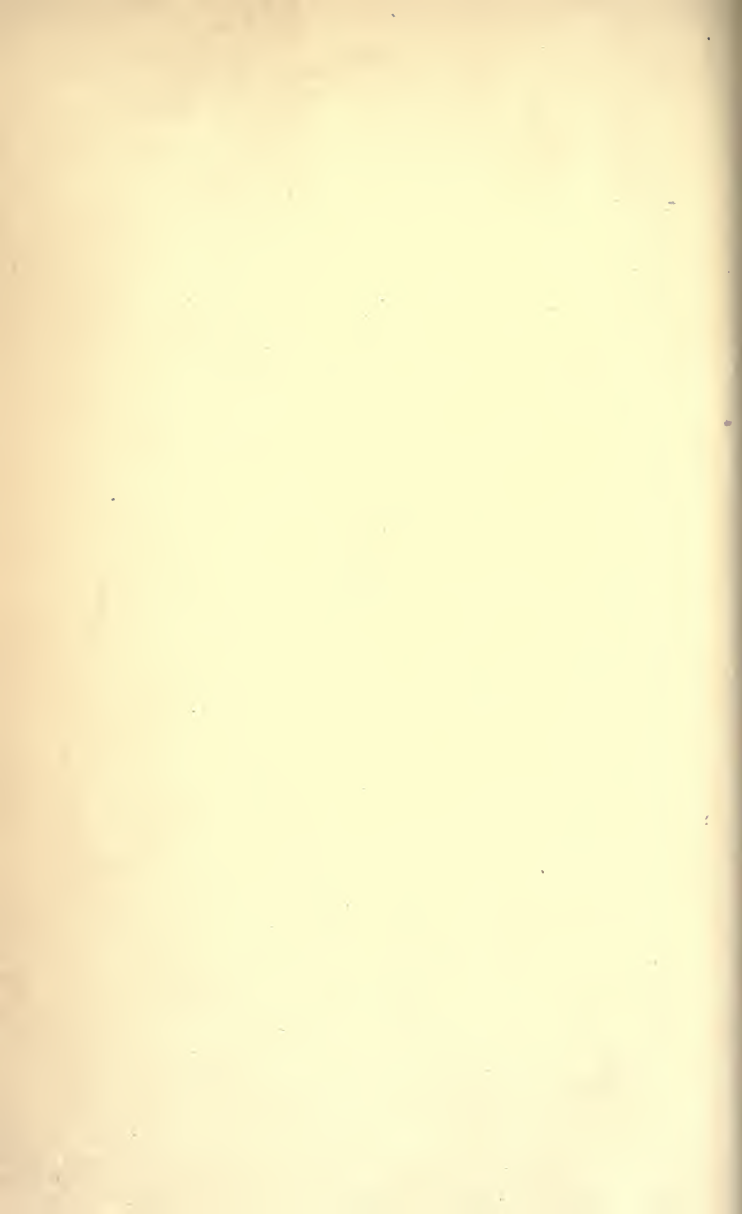


Dedicated

TO THE MEMORY OF

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI,

WHOSE GLORY IT IS TO HAVE DONE SO MUCH TO
STRENGTHEN THE LOVE OF BEAUTY IN ART,
IN LITERATURE, AND IN LIFE.



To D. G. R.

I.

*From out the darkness cometh never a sound :
No voice doth reach us from the silent place :
There is one goal beyond life's blindfold race,
For victor and for victim—burial-ground.
O friend, revered, belov'd, may'st thou have found
Beyond the shadowy gates a yearning face,
A beckoning hand to guide thee with swift pace
From the dull wave Lethean gliding round.*

*Hope dwelt with thee, not Fear ; Faith, not Despair :
But little heed thou had'st of the grave's gloom.
What though thy body lies so deeply there
Where the land throbs with tidal surge and boom,
Thy soul doth breathe some Paradisal air
And Rest long sought thou hast where amaranths bloom.*

II.

*Yet even if Death indeed with pitiful sign
Bade us drink deep of some oblivious draught,
Is it not well to know, ere we have quaffed
The soul-deceiving poppied anodyne,
That not in vain erewhile we drank the wine
Of life—that not all blankly or in craft
Of evil went the days wherein we laughed
And joyed i' the sun, unknowing aught divine ?*

*Not so thy doom, whatever fate betide :
Not so for thee, O poet-heart and true,
Who fearless watched, as evermore it grew,
The shadow of Death creep closer to thy side.—
A glory with thy ebbing life withdrew,
And we inherit now its deathless Pride.*

WILLIAM SHARP.



THE SONNET :

Its Characteristics and History.

FOR the concise expression of an isolated poetic thought—an intellectual or sensuous “wave” keenly felt, emotionally and rhythmically—the sonnet would seem to be the best medium, the means apparently prescribed by certain radical laws of melody and harmony, in other words, of nature : even as the swallow’s wing is the best for rapid volant wheel and shift, as the heron’s for mounting by wide gyrations, as that of the kite or the albatross for sustained suspension.

To bring this more clearly home to the mind of the reader unacquainted with the true scope of our sonnet-literature and of the technique of the sonnet itself, and to illustrate its development and capacity, is the aim of this introductory note.

It is no new ground that is here broken. The sonnet has had many apologists and critical historians, and has been considered from many points of view. Chief among those of our countrymen who have devoted themselves to the special study of this fascinating poetic vehicle may be named the following : Capel Lofft, who in 1813-14 published under the title of *Laura* a valuable and interesting but very unequal and badly arranged anthology of original and translated sonnets ; R. H. Housman, who in 1833 issued a good selection, with an interesting prefatory note ; Dyce, whose small but judiciously compiled volume was a pleasant possession at a time when sonnet-literature gained but slight public attention ; Leigh Hunt, who laboured in this field genuinely *con amore* ; Mr. Tomlinson, whose work

on the sonnet has much of abiding value ; Mr. Dennis, whose "English Sonnets" served as an unmistakable index to the awakening of general interest in this poetic form ; Mr. D. M. Main, an accomplished student of literature and a critic possessing the true instinct, whose honour it is to have produced the most exhaustive sonnet-anthology—with quite a large volumeful of notes—in our language (for Căpel Lofft's *Laura* is largely made up of Italian sonnets and translations) ; Mr. S. Waddington, who a year or two ago produced two pleasant little volumes of selections ; and, finally, Mr. Hall Caine, whose *Sonnets of Three Centuries* at once obtained the success which that ably edited compilation deserved. To all these writers, but more especially, of course, to Mr. Main—from the student's point of view—the present editor is indebted, as must be every future worker in this secluded but not least beautiful section of the Garden of Poetry. There are, moreover, one or two students who have done good service in this cause without having published in book form either their opinions or any sonnet-anthology ; especially among these should reference be made to the anonymous writer of two admirable papers on the sonnet in *The Quarterly Review* (1866) ; to the anonymous author of the thoughtful and suggestive article in *The Westminster Review* (1871) ; and to the anonymous contributor of the two highly interesting papers on sonnet-literature which appeared in *The Dublin Review* for 1876 and 1877 ; to Mr. Ashcroft Noble, a capable and discriminating critic, whose article in *The Contemporary Review* attracted considerable notice ; to the late Rector of Lincoln College, Mr. Mark Pattison, who prefaced his edition of Milton's sonnets with a suggestive essay ; to the late Archbishop Trench, the value of whose edition of Wordsworth's sonnets is heightened in the same way ; to Mr. J. Addington Symonds ; and to Mr. Theodore Watts, whose influence in this direction is very marked. Nor should I omit to mention two charming French anthologies, *La Monographie des Sonnets* of Louis de Veyrières and *Le Livre des Sonnets* of M. Charles Asselineau ; nor, again, Dr. Karl Lentzner's able treatise, *Über das Sonett und Seine Gestaltung in der englischen Dichtung bis Milton* (1886).

There are two leading reasons for now issuing a new collection : to show how much of the poetic thought of our own time has been cast in the mould of the sonnet, and how worthy that mould is of the honour ; and to meet, by the formation of an anthology of which the first and only absolute principle is the inclusion of no sonnet that does not possess—of course in varying degree—distinct poetic value, the widespread and manifestly increasing appreciation of and liking for this metrical form. Even yet no more can with justice be said than that it is limitedly popular, for not only is there still a general ignorance of what a sonnet really is and what technical qualities are essential to a fine specimen of this poetic genus, but a perfect plague of feeble productions in fourteen-lines has done its utmost, ever since Wordsworth's influence became a recognised factor, to render the sonnet as *effete* a form of metrical expression as the irregular ballad-stanza with a meaningless refrain.

Concerning every method of expression, in each of the arts, there is always a *pro* and *contra*, but few metrical forms have been more fortunate than the sonnet, for its *contras* have generally been pronounced either by persons quite ignorant of what they were discussing or incapable of appreciating any excellence save when meted out, as it were, by the yard. On the other hand, those who have studied it love it as the naturalist loves his microscope—and veritably, like the microscope, it discloses many beautiful things which, if imbedded in some greater mass, might have been but faintly visible and incoherent. Then some of the greatest of poets have used it, not a few having selected it as the choicest mould into which to cast their most personal, their most vivid utterances : thus did Petrarca, and thus in less exclusive degree did Dante and Milton ; thus Shakespeare did, and Mrs. Browning, and Wordsworth, and Rossetti, and many another true poet in our own and other lands. The stirring of the poetic impulse is very markedly at work among us at present, and there is no more remarkable sign of the times than the steadily growing public appreciation of the sonnet as a poetic vehicle. For one thing, its conciseness is an

immense boon in those days when books multiply like gossamer-flies in a sultry June; it is realised that if good a sonnet can speedily be read and enjoyed, that if exceptionally fine it can with ease be committed to memory, and that if bad it can be recognised as such at a glance, and can be relegated to oblivion by the turning of a single page. There is no doubt that a writer in *The Dublin Review* is correct when he regards "the increasing attention bestowed on the history and structure of the sonnet as an indication of the growth of a higher and healthier poetical taste." It may be remembered that Leigh Hunt makes a statement to the effect that the love of Italian poetry has always been greatest in England when English genius has been in its most poetical condition; this has, as I think most will agree, been true in the past, even up to so late a date as the middle of this century, and, if a renascence of this interest have a prophetic quality, then we should be on the eve of a new poetic period, for once again early Italian poetry is claiming its students and its many admirers. And perhaps nothing in Italian poetry is better worth study than its beautiful sonnet-literature. Whether in Italy or in England, "no form of verse," as Mr. Waddington has well remarked, "no description of poetic composition, has yielded a richer harvest than the sonnet." One can agree with this without fully endorsing Menzini's statement that the sonnet is the touchstone of great geniuses; for it must not be overlooked that some of our truest poets, living as well as dead, are unable to write sonnets of the first class—noticeably, for instance, two such masters of verbal music as Shelley and Coleridge—nor must it for a moment be forgotten that no one form has a monopoly of the most treasurable poetic beauty, that the mould is a very secondary matter compared with the substance which renders it vital, and that a fine poem in not altogether the best form is infinitely better than a poor or feeble one in a flawless structure. As a matter of fact, poetic impulse that arises out of the suddenly kindled imagination may generally be trusted to instinctively find expression through the medium that is most fitting for it. To employ a humble simile, a poetic idea

striving towards or passing into utterance is often like one of those little hermit-crabs which creep into whatever shell suits them the moment they are ready to leave their too circumscribed abodes. Poetry I take to be the dynamic condition of the imaginative and rhythmical faculties in combination, finding expression verbally and metrically—and the animating principle is always of necessity greater than the animated form, as the soul is superior to the body. Before entering on the subject of the technique of the sonnet, on its chief types, and on its legitimate and irregular variations, a few words may be said concerning the derivation of its name and its earliest history.

It is generally agreed that “sonnet” is an abbreviation of the Italian *sonetto*, a short strain (literally, a little sound), that word being the diminutive of *suono* = sound. The *sonetto* was originally a poem recited with sound, that is, with a musical accompaniment, a short poem of the *rispetto* kind, sung to the strains of lute or mandolin. Probably it had an existence, and possibly even its name, at a period considerably anterior to that where we first find definite mention of it, just as the irregular stanzaic form known as the ballad existed in England and Scotland prior to any generally accepted definition thereof. As to its first birth-place there is some uncertainty: it has been asserted to have been a native of Provence, that mother of poets, but some have it that the sonnet is an outcome of the Greek epigram. This idea is certainly not defensible, but while it has been ridiculed as unworthy of entertainment the scoffers seem generally to have had in mind the modern epigram, a very different thing: the essential principle of the ancient epigram was the presentment of a single idea, emotion, or fact, and in this it is entirely at one with the rival that has supplanted it—but in technique it was much simpler. It is much more likely that the *stornello* was the Italian equivalent of the sonnet—that fleeting bar of verbal melody, which in its narrow compass of two lines presents one fact of nature and one metaphorical allusion based thereon. The *stornello* stands in perhaps even closer relationship to the ancient epigram than the *rispetto* to the

modern sonnet. To readers interested in the true epigram, and unacquainted with recent translations of or works thereon, I may recommend Dr. Richard Garnett's delightful little volume, *Idylls and Epigrams* (Macmillan), and Mr. William Watson's *Original Epigrams*, with its admirable Note. Housman compares the epigram and the sonnet to the well-known Grecian architectural types, the Ionic column and the Corinthian—the former a specimen of pure and graceful beauty, the latter of more elaborate but still of equally pure and graceful genius. A very far-fetched theory is that the sonnet is an Italian shadow of the ancient ode, its divisions corresponding with the strophe, antistrophe, epode, and antepode. It is not in the least likely that this may have been its origin; it is scarcely more probable that its source may have been the ancient epigram; in all likelihood it was of Sicilian birth, gradually forming or being moulded into a certain recognised type, and apparently the outcome of the *stornelli* which every contadino sang as he pruned his olive-trees or tended his vines. It ought to be mentioned, also, that another origin has been claimed for the word, viz., that it is the French *sonnette*, and that its parentage may be primarily ascribed to the tinkling sheep-bells of Provençal days. The *stornello* is the germ of its popular allies, the *sestina rima*, *ottava rima*, and the *rispetto*. The *stornello* consists of two lines, or it may be of four, on two rhymes; and from this metrical type issues in time the sonnet. The *sestina rima* is the original quatrain with an added couplet on a new rhyme; the *ottava rima* is an expansion of the original form into six lines on two rhymes, with a concluding couplet as in the *sestina*; in the *rispetto*, as accurately characterised by Mr. J. A. Symonds, the quatrain is doubled or prolonged indefinitely, and is followed by an additional system of one or more couplets which return or reflect upon the original theme: the quatrain or its expansion is composed upon two rhymes—the prolongation, or return, is composed upon two other rhymes. In the sonnet the germinal four lines have developed into two quatrains, still on two rhymes: and the prolongation invariably consists of six lines, on

either two or three rhymes, with some freedom of arrangement.

Like a plant of steady growth, the seedling of the sonnet, having fallen into suitable ground somewhere about the middle of the thirteenth century, gradually forced its obscure and tortuous way towards the light. Considerably before the close of the thirteenth century we find it in fulfilled bud, in due time to open into the mature Petrarcan flower, the perfected stock whence such a multiplicity of varieties has come. Many buds did, indeed, arise about the same period, and there is still preserved at Milan (according to Muratori, in his *Perfetta Poesia*) a manuscript Latin treatise on poems in the Italian vernacular—*Poetica volgare*—written in the year 1332 by a learned and ingenious judge of Padua named Antonio di Tempo, wherein mention is made of sixteen distinct species of sonnet, most of them posterior to the unfolding of the finest and most energetic bud, but some anterior thereto. To carry on the metaphor a little further, the gardener who tended and cultivated this choice bud was a certain clerical poet known widely as Fra Guittone d'Arezzo—not the least worthy among the illustrious little band which that small Italian town has produced. At the same time, such honour as is due must be rendered to a little known predecessor in the art, the author of the sonnet beginning *Però ch'amore*, which, as Mr. Symonds has pointed out, is presumably the earliest extant example of this metrical structure. The poet in question was Pier delle Vigne, Secretary of State to Frederick II. of Sicily, and while his little poem differs from the typical Italian sonnet in that the rhyme-arrangement of the octave is simply that of two ordinary conjoint quatrains, or two rhymes throughout, it is a true example in all other particulars. Fra Guittone flourished during the greater part of the thirteenth century, and he it was who first definitely adopted and adhered to what was even then recognised as the best modern form for the expression of an isolated emotion, thought, or idea. His sonnets are not only the model of those of his great successor, Petrarca, but are also in themselves excellent productions, and especially

noteworthy when considered in relation to the circumstances under which they came into existence. From the work of Guittone d'Arezzo—whom Capel Lofft called the Columbus of poetic literature, from his having discovered the sonnet even as the Genoese navigator discovered America—to that of the sweetest-voiced of all Italian poets, there is a considerable step. The period was eminently an experimental one, and in sonnet-literature as elsewhere. While the Guittonian sonnet remained the most admired model, many variations thereof and divergences therefrom became temporarily popular, exerting an unfortunate influence by allowing free scope to slovenly or indifferent workmanship. But Petrarca and Dante laid an ineffaceable seal on the Guittonian form, not prohibiting minor variations, and even themselves indulging in experimental divergences: in the hands of the one it gained an exquisite beauty, a subtle music abidingly sweet, and in those of the other a strength and vigour that supplied as it were the masculine element to the already existent feminine. Tasso and the other great Italians followed suit, and the sonnet became the favourite Italian poetic vehicle, as it remains to this day, though, alas! but the body still lives, the soul having fled or—it may be—lying in a profound and apparently undisturbable trance. Mr. Symonds has objected that this statement can hardly be taken literally in view of the excellent poems of Stecchetti and the Veristi, but, broadly speaking, it can hardly be doubted that the sonnet in Italy has fallen upon evil days when it is mostly to be found adorning young ladies' albums, or as an accompaniment to presents of flowers and confectionery. In due course Camoens in the South, Bellay and the early French poets in the West, and Surrey and Spenser in England, turned towards this form as birds towards a granary unroofed by the wind. Concerning Mr. Hall Caine's theory that the English sonnet is an indigenous growth, I shall have something to say later on.

It will be well to consider the sonnet in a threefold aspect: the aspect of Formal Excellence, that of Characteristic Excellence, and that of Ideal Excellence. By the first

I refer to technique simply ; by the second to individuality, expression ; by the third to the union of imagination, suggestiveness, melody of word and line, and harmony of structure. The section of this introductory note devoted to the consideration of Formal Excellence may be comprehensively headed *Sonnet-Structure*.

Sonnet-Structure. It is a matter of surprise that even now there are many well-read people who have no other idea of what a sonnet is than that it is a short poem—what kind of short poem they very vaguely apprehend. I have heard it described as any short poem of one or more stanzas used for filling up blank spaces in magazine pages—a definition not so very absurd when we remember that a poet and critic like Coleridge pronounced it “a medium for the expression of a mere momentary burst of passion.” But the majority of readers of poetry know that it is limited to fourteen lines in length : beyond this the knowledge of all save a comparative few does not go. Even among verse-writers themselves there is some vagueness on this point : I have heard one well-known writer say that so-and-so’s sonnet was a fine one, when the piece in question consisted of three octosyllabic quatrains ; another spoke of *In Memoriam* as made up of a number of linked sonnets ; and one of the contributors to this volume lately remarked to me that any one could write a sonnet—it was simply to say something in fourteen lines instead of in ten or twenty!

The commonest complaint against the sonnet is its supposed arbitrariness—a complaint based on a complete misconception of its nature. In the sense that a steersman must abide by the arbitrary law of the compass, in the sense that the engine-driver must abide by the arbitrary machinery of the engineer, in the sense that the battalion must wheel to the right or the left at the arbitrary word of command—in this sense is the sonnet an arbitrary form. Those who complain seem to forget that the epic, the tragedy, the ode, are also arbitrary forms, and that it is somewhat out of place to rail against established rules of architecture in the erection of a cottage, and to blink those in the building of a mansion or a palace. Any form of creative art, to survive,

must conform to certain restrictions: would *Paradise Lost* hold its present rank if Milton had interspersed Cavalier and Roundhead choruses throughout his epic? What would we think of the *Æneid* if Virgil had enlivened its pages with Catullian love-songs or comic interludes after the manner of Plautus or Terence? The structure of the sonnet is arbitrary in so far that it is the outcome of continuous experiment moulded by mental and musical influences: it is not a form to be held sacred simply because this or that great poet, or a dozen poets, pronounced it to be the best possible poetic vehicle for its purpose. It has withstood the severest test that any form can be put to: it has survived the changes of language, the fluctuations of taste, the growth of culture, the onward sweep and the resilience of the wave of poetry that flows to and fro, "with kingly pauses of reluctant pride," across all civilised peoples: for close upon six hundred years have elapsed since Fra Guittone and Dante and Petrarca found the perfected instrument ready for them to play their sweetest music upon. Guittone was like the first man who adventured frequently upon the waters in a wedge-shaped craft, after whom every one agreed that grooved and narrow bows were better than the roundness of a tub or the clumsy length of a hollowed tree-trunk. Or again, he may be compared with the great Florentine painter Masaccio, who first introduced the reality of life into Italian art, or with the even greater Fleming, Jan van Eyck, who invented, or at any rate inaugurated, painting in oils as now understood: though he too of course had his predecessor, even as Masolino foreshadowed Masaccio, and the monk Theophilus foretold the discovery that is commonly attributed to Hubert van Eyck and his more famous brother.

The Guittonian limitation of the sonnet's length to fourteen lines was, we may rest assured, not wholly fortuitous. The musical and poetic instinct probably, however, determined its final form more than any apprehension of the fundamental natural law beneath its metrical principles. The multiplicity and easy facility of Italian rhymes rendered the more limited epigram of the ancients

too malleable a metrical material in one way, and too obstinate a material in another, for while almost any one with a quick ear and ready tongue could have rattled off a loose quatrain, it was difficult to give sufficient weight and sonority thereto with a language where rhyme-sounds are as plentiful as pebbles in a shallow mountain stream. It became necessary, then, to find a mould for the expression of a single thought, emotion, or poetically apprehended fact, which would allow sufficient scope for sonority of music and the unfolding of the motive and its application, and which yet would not prove too ample for that which was to be put into it. Repeated experiments tended to prove that twelve, fourteen, or sixteen lines were ample for the presentation of any isolated idea or emotion; again, that the sensitive ear was apt to find the latter number a shade too long, or cumbrous; and still later, that while a very limited number of rhymes was necessitated by the shortness of the poem, the sixteen reverberations of some three or four terminal sounds frequently became monotonous and unpleasing. Ten or twelve-line poems were ascertained to be as a rule somewhat fragmentary, and only worthily served when the poet was desirous of presenting to his readers a simple pearl rather than a diamond with its flashing facets, though here also there was not enough expansion for restricted rhyme, while there was too much for merely two or at the most three distinct terminal sounds. Again, it was considered advisable that the expression should be twofold, that is, that there should be the presentation of the motive, and its application; hence arose the division of the fourteen-line poem into two systems. How were these systems to be arranged? were seven lines to be devoted to the presentation of the idea or emotion, and seven to its application: seven to the growth of the tree, and seven to its fruitage: seven to the oncoming wave, and seven to its resurgence? The sensitive ear once more decided the question, recognising that if there were to be a break in the flow of melody—and the necessity of pauses it had already foreseen—it could not be at a seventh line, which would bring about an overbalance of rhyme. Experience

and metrical music together coincided to prove that the greatest amount of dignity and beauty could be obtained by the main pause occurring at the end of the eighth line. Here, then, we arrive at the two systems into which the sonnet is divided—the major and the minor: and because the major system consists of eight lines, it is called the “octave,” and correspondingly the minor system is known as the “sestet.” It soon became evident, however, that something more was wanted: it was as if a harpist had discovered that with another string or two he could greatly add to the potential powers of his instrument. This was the number and the true distribution of rhyme-sounds. How many were to occur in the octave, how many in the sestet? or were they to pervade both systems indiscriminately? Even before Dante and Petrarca wrote their sonnets it was an accepted canon that the octave lost its dignity if it contained more than two distinct rhyme-sounds, or at most three. In the sestet it was recognised that a greater freedom was allowable, if not in the number of rhyme-sounds, at least in their disposition. Again, Guittone had definitely demonstrated that in length each sonnet-line should consist of ten syllables, the decasyllabic metre permitting a far greater sonority than the octosyllabic; and that acute experimentalist probably quite realised that continuous sonority and unbroken continuity of motive were two of the most essential characteristics of the sonnet. No one who has any knowledge of the laws both of musical and of poetical forms would be surprised if it were proved, as has been asserted, that Fra Guittone or his predecessors perceived and acted in accordance with the close analogy existing between their chosen metrical form and the musical system established by Guido Bonatti in the eleventh century. Throughout Fra Guittone’s work it is evident that he is no blind blunderer, but a poet striving to make his vehicle the best possible, working upon it with a determinate aim.

In most of his sonnets we find the following arrangement: in the octave the first, fourth, fifth, and eighth lines rhyme, and so do the second, third, sixth, and seventh. By

this arrangement the utmost attainable dignity and harmony is obtained, there being no clashing of rhymes, no jingle, but a steady, sweeping, wave-like movement entirely satisfactory to the ear. There have been some fine sonnets written with the introduction of a third rhyme-sound into the octave (the terminations of the sixth and seventh lines), and there can be no doubt that if this were equally satisfactory to the ear, a still greater and most valuable expansion would be given to the English sonnet; but to the sensitive ear, especially sensitive among Italians, it is as out of place as some new strain is in a melody that is already in itself amply sufficient, and that loses in effect by the alien introduction. This variation never gained ground in Italy, though in Spain it found favour with some of the Castilian sonneteers as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century.

It gained instead of losing in what Mr. Theodore Watts calls the solidarity of the outflowing wave by its nominal subdivision into two *basi* or bases, as the Italians name what we call the quatrains: upon these *basi* the poetic image could rest, either rendered clear to the reader supported on both, or appealing to him by an illuminating gleam from one base, and then by an added light from the other. The octave of the perfect sonnet, then, we find to consist of two quatrains, capable of divisional pause yet forming a solid whole: in all, eight lines following a prescribed rhyme-arrangement, which may be thus expressed—

a — b — b — a — a — b — b — a

The sestet in like manner is subdivided equally, in this case into sections of three lines each: these sections are called *the tercets*. There can be either three rhymes or two, and the variations thereupon are numerous. The Guittonian, or, as it is generally called, the Petrarcan sestet-type, is one containing three distinct rhyme-sounds, and employing the valuable pause permitted by the true use of the double-tercet; but a system of two rhyme-sounds is, as far as “metrical emphasis” goes, much stronger, and any arrangement of the rhymes (whether two or three) is permissible, save that of a couplet at the close. It is a difficult question

to decide even for one's-self whether it is better for the sestet to contain only two rhymes or three : personally I am inclined to favour the restriction to two, on account of the great accession of metrical emphasis resulting to this restriction. But, on the other hand, the normal type (the Petrarchan) affords a better opportunity for a half-break at the end of the first tercet, corresponding to the same mid-way in the octave and to the full break at the latter's close. It would be a mistake, however, to dogmatise upon the point, and the poet will probably instinctively use the tercets in just correspondence with his emotional impulse. The Italian masters recognised as the best that division of the sestet into two distinct tercets (which they termed *volte*, or turnings), which, while not interfering with what Mr. Watts calls the ebb-movement of the sestet, are fully capable of throwing out two separate lights in one gleam—like the azure hollow and yellow flame in burning gas.

The sestet of the pure Guittonian sonnet, then, may be expressed by the following formula :—

$$a-b-c : -a-b-c$$

The following are among the more or less appropriate variations :—

1	2	3*	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
b	b	b	b	a	a	b	b	b	b	b	b	a	a	b	b	b	a
a	b	b	a	b	b	c	a	c	c	c	b	b	b	c	b	c	b
b	a	a	b	b	a	b	c	c	b	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	b
a	a	b	b	a	a	a	b	b	c	a	c	c	b	c	a	c	c
b	b	a	a	b	b	c	c	a	a	b	a	b	c	b	c	b	c
viii.	cxix.	ii.	xi.	cxiii.	cxlv.	xcviii.	v.	clxxiii.	cxl.	c.	iv.	ccxii.	xxxviii.	lxxiii.	xc.	cxxiv.	xc.

The figures in the third division of this Table denote examples among the Sonnets in this book of the variation in question.

* Rossetti used to say that he considered this (No. 3) to be the best form of sestet, if it could be achieved without any damage to intellectual substance.

Of these, it seems to me that the two most musical—the least disturbant to the melodic wave—are the first and third,

$$\frac{a - b - a - b - a - b}{a - b - b - a - b - a}$$

The occurrence of a rhymed couplet at the close of the sonnet is rare indeed in Italian literature: I cannot recall a single example of it among the classic masters of the sonnet, and even in later times I fancy it would be difficult to find a single good Italian example worthy the name with this termination. But it does not necessarily follow that a closing couplet is equally unpleasant to the ear in English, for in the latter practically all sonnets are what the Italians call *mute*, that is, the rhyming terminals are in one syllable, while in the language of Petrarca and Dante they are trisyllabic and dissyllabic—a circumstance materially affecting our consideration of this much-debated point. Not only are there few good English sonnets with dissyllabic terminals (I remember none with trisyllabic throughout, and do not suppose there is an example thereof to be found), but there are few of any quality. In Mrs. Alice Meynell's *Preludes* there are one or two partially so constructed, e.g., "A Day to Come," quoted in the Appendix to this volume. But, notwithstanding the differences in terminal structure, it is open to question whether the rhymed couplet-ending be not almost as disagreeable to the English as to the Italian ear, unless the form be that of the so-called Shakespearian sonnet. One of the chief pleasures of the sonnet is the expectancy of the closing portion, and when the ear has become attuned to the sustained flow of the normal octave and also of the opening lines of the sestet, the couplet is apt to come upon one with an unexpected jar, as if some one had opened and banged-to a door while the musician was letting the last harmonious chords thrill under his touch. There has been a good deal written on this point, and Mr. Hall Caine and others have succinctly pointed out their reasons for strongly objecting to it. It is, moreover, perhaps the last point on which sonneteers themselves will agree. Writing some three or four years ago on

this subject, I stated that "if the arrangement of lines suits the emotion, I am not offended by a concluding rhymed couplet, or by the quatrains used to such purpose by Shakespeare, Drayton, and Tennyson-Turner;" but then, undoubtedly, only one side of the question was clear to me. Continuous study of the sonnet has convinced me that, while many English sonnets of the Guittonian type, even by good writers, are markedly weakened by rhymed couplet-endings, in the Shakespearian form the closure in question is not only not objectionable but is absolutely as much the right thing as the octave of two rhymes is for the Petrarchan sonnet. Most writers on the sonnet either state generally that they object or that they do not object to the rhymed couplets at the close: thus one anonymous critic writes that he fails "to see wherein a couplet ending is not as musical as any other arrangement, that indeed it is demonstrably so by the citation of some of the most striking sonnets in our language"—while, on the other hand, Mr. Caine refers to the closure in question as being as offensive to his ear as the couplets at the ends of scenes and acts in some Shakespearian plays. It seems to me now that there are, broadly speaking, but two normal types in English of sonnet-structures—the Petrarchan and the Shakespearian: whenever a motive is cast in the mould of the former a rhymed couplet ending is, to my own ear at least, quite out of place; whenever it is embodied in the latter the final couplet is eminently satisfactory.

Before, however, considering the five chief types (primarily, two), I may finish my general remarks on the early history of the sonnet.

That by the fourteenth century the mature sonnet was fully understood and recognised is evident from the facts (set forth by Mr. Tomlinson) that of the forty examples attributed (one or two of them somewhat doubtfully) to Dante, thirty-three belong to the strict Guittonian type: of the three hundred and seventeen produced throughout a long period by Petrarca, not one has more than two rhymes in the octave, and only fifteen have any variations from the normal type (eleven in alternate rhymes, and four with the

first, third, sixth, and eighth lines harmonising); while two hundred and ninety agree in having nothing more than a double rhyme both in the major and in the minor system—one hundred and sixteen belonging to the pure Guittonian type, one hundred and seven with the tercets in two alternate rhymes (Type I. in foregoing table), and sixty-seven with three rhyme-sounds, arranged as in Type VII. in foregoing table. Again, of the eighty sonnets of Michael Angelo, seven-eighths are in the normal type. It is thus evident that, at a period when the Italian ear was specially keen to all harmonious effects, the verdict of the masters in this species of poetic composition was given in favour of two sonnet formations—the Guittonian structure as to the octave, and the co-relative arrangement of the sestet a—b—c—a—b—c, or a—b—a—b—a—b, with a preference for the former. Another variation susceptible of very beautiful effect is that of Type IX. (*ante*), but though it can most appropriately be used when exceptional tenderness, sweetness, or special impressiveness is sought after, it does not seem to have found much favour. I may quote here in exemplification of it one of the most beautiful of all Italian sonnets. It is one of Dante's, and is filled with the breath of music as a pine-tree with the cadences of the wind—the close being supremely exquisite: while it will also afford to those who are unacquainted with Italian an idea of the essential distinction between the trisyllabic and dissyllabic terminals of the southern and the one-syllable or “mute” endings of the English sonnet, and at the same time serve to illustrate what has been already said concerning the pauses at the quatrains and tercets:—

Tanto gentile, e tanto onesta pare
 La donna mia, quand' ella altrui saluta,
 Ch' ogni lingua divien tremando muta,
 E gli occhi non l' ardiscon di guardare.

Ella sen va, sentendosi laudare,
 Umilmente d' onestà vestuta;
 E par che sia una cosa venuta
 Di cielo in terra a miracol mostrare.

Mostrasi sì piacente a chi la mira,
 Che dà per gli occhi una dolcezza al core,
 Che 'ntender non la può chi non la pruova.

E par, che dalla sua labbia si mova,
 Uno spirito soave, pien d' amore,
 Che va dicendo all' anima : sospira.

I need not here enter into detail concerning all the variations that have been made upon the normal type; in Italian these are very numerous, as also in French. In Germany the model type (where, by-the-by, the sonnet was first known by the name of *Klang-gedicht*, a very matter-of-fact way of rendering *sonetto* in its poetic sense!) has always been the Petrarchan, as exemplified in the flawless statuesque sonnets of Platen. The following six Italian variations represent those most worthy of notice:—(1) *Versi sdrucchioli*, twelve-syllabled lines, *i.e.* (*Leigh Hunt*) slippery or sliding verses, so called on account of their terminating in dactyls—tēnērě—Vēnērě. (2) Caudated, or Tailed Sonnets—*i.e.*, sonnets to which as it were an unexpected augmentation of two or five or more lines is made: an English example of which will be found in any edition of Milton's works, under the title, "On the New Forcers of Conscience." (3) Mute Sonnets: on one-syllable terminals, but generally used only for satirical and humorous purposes—in the same way as we, contrariwise, select dissyllabic terminals as best suited for badinage. (4) Linked, or Interlaced Sonnets, corresponding to the Spenserian form, which will be formulated shortly. (5) The Continuous or Iterating Sonnet, on one rhyme throughout, and (6) the same, on two rhymes throughout. French poets (who, speaking generally, are seen to less advantage in the sonnet than in any other poetic vehicle) have delighted in much experimentalising: their only commendable deviation, one commonly made, is a commencement of the sestet with a rhymed couplet (a mould into which Mr. Swinburne is fond of casting his impulsive speech)—but their octosyllabic and dialogue sonnets, and other divergences, are nothing more than experiments, more or less interesting and able. The

paring-down system has reached its extreme level in the following clever piece of trifling by Comte Paul de Resseguier—a “sonnet” of single-syllable lines :—

EPITAPHE D'UNE JEUNE FILLE.

*Fort
Belle,
Elle
Dort!*

*Sort
Frêle
Quelle
Mort!*

*Rose .
Close—
La*

*Brise
L'a
Prise.*

Among English sonnets the chief variations are the rhymed-couplet ending added to the preceding twelve lines, cast in the regular form : the sonnet ending with an Alexandrine (*vide* No. c.): the sonnet with an Alexandrine closing both octave and sestet (*vide* No. xxxv.): the Assonantal Sonnet, *i.e.*, a sonnet without rhymes, but with the vowel sounds of the words so arranged as to produce a distinctly harmonious effect almost identical with that of rhyme-music. Of this form Mr. Wilfred Blunt, among others, has given a good example in his *Love-Sonnets of Proteus*: the octosyllabic sonnets (mere experiments), written by Mr. E. Cracroft Lefroy and Mr. S. Waddington and others; and the sonnet constructed on two rhyme-sounds throughout. Among the last named I may mention Mr. William Bell Scott's “Garland for Advancing Years,” Mr. Edmund Gosse's “Pipe-Player,” and Lord Hanmer's “Winter.” The latter I may quote as a fine but little-known example of this experimental variation :—

WINTER.

To the short days, and the great vault of shade
 The whitener of the hills, we come—alas,
 There is no colour in the faded grass,
 Save the thick frost on its hoar stems arrayed.
 Cold is it : as a melancholy maid,
 The latest of the seasons now doth pass,
 With a dead garland, in her icy glass
 Setting its spikes about her crisped braid.
 The streams shall breathe, along the orchards laid,
 In the soft spring-time ; and the frozen mass
 Melt from the snow-drift ; flowerets where it was
 Shoot up—the cuckoo shall delight the glade ;
 But to new glooms through some obscure crevasse
 She will have past—that melancholy maid.

This interesting and poetic experiment would have been still better but for the musical flaw in the first line (*days—shade*) and those in the 13th-14th (*crevasse—past*), though of course in this instance the repetition of *maid* as a terminal is intentional, and is a metrical gain rather than a flaw. In the Appendix will be quoted a sonnet by Mr. J. A. Symonds, constructed on three rhymes throughout. Dialogue-sonnets are not an English variation : I am aware of very few in our language,—the earliest which I have met with is that written by Alexander, Earl of Stirling (1580-1640). There are one or two sonnets in French with octaves where the first *three* lines rhyme, and therewith also the fifth, sixth, and seventh : one, in English, will be found in the Appendix.

We may now pass to the consideration of the five standard formal types, thereby closing the first section of this Introduction, that on "Sonnet-structure."

These formal types are (1) The Petrarchan. (2) The Spenserian. (3) The Shakespearian. (4) The Miltonic : and (5) The Contemporary.

The Guittonian, or Petrarchan sonnet, has already been explained from the structural point of view : but its formal characteristics may be summarised once more. (1) It, like all sonnets, must primarily consist of fourteen decasyllabic lines. (2) It must be made up of a major and minor

system: the major system consisting of eight lines, or two quatrains, to be known as the octave; the minor consisting of six lines, or two tercets, to be known as the sestet. (3)

Two rhyme-sounds only must pervade the octave, and their arrangement (nominally arbitrary, but in reality based on an ascertainable melodic law) must be so that the first, fourth, fifth, and eighth terminals rhyme, while the second, third, sixth, and seventh do so also on a different note. (4)

What is generally looked upon as completing the normal type is a sestet with the tercet divisions clearly marked, and employing three rhyme-sounds, the co-relatives being the terminals of lines 1 and 4, 2 and 5, 3 and 6.

Among the numerous sonnets (the great majority naturally) in this anthology conforming to the two archetypal forms, the reader of these remarks may glance for reference at Mr. Matthew Arnold's "Immortality," and at Mr. Theodore Watts' "Foreshadowings."

The first English sonnets were composed by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c. 1517-1547); and the first appearance of any in book form was in the rare publication briefly known as *Tottel's Miscellany*, whose full title is "Songs and Sonettes written by the ryght honourable lorde Henry Howard late earle of Surrey, and other." These accomplished young noblemen had resided in Italy, and, themselves delighting in Italian poetic literature — especially Petrarca's work — hastened, on their return to their own country, to acclimatise the new poetic vehicle which had become so famous in the hands of two of Italy's greatest writers. Their efforts, with a new and difficult medium and a language which was still only approaching that state in which Spenser and Marlowe and Shakespeare found it, were only very partially successful, and, as we now know, their sonnets owed most of what was excellent in them to Italian sources. The remarkable thing about them is that they all end with rhymed-couplets, an arrangement distinctly opposed to any with which they were acquainted in another language. On the other hand, it must be noted (this point should be remembered a little later when we come to discuss Mr.

Caine's theory) that Wyatt's are otherwise mostly on the Italian model. Surrey, again, evidently found his task over-difficult of satisfactory performance, and so constantly experimented with a fourteen-line sonnet-mould—like a musician who, arriving in his own land, finds his countrymen's ears not easily attuned to the melodies of the new instrument he brings with him from abroad, and so tries again and again to find some way of making his novel mandolin or lute-sounds attractive to ears accustomed to the harsher strains of fife or windpipe. Thus we find him composing on the two-rhyme-throughout system; linking the three elegiac quatrains and a couplet; and otherwise feeling his way—evidently coming ultimately to the conclusion that the three quatrains and the couplet constituted the form best suited to the English language. This may concisely be set forth in the following formula:—

A—B—A—B C—D—C—D E—F—E—F G—G

A much more original and more potent poetic nature next endeavoured to find meet expression in the sonnet. Spenser, that great metricist and genuine poet, notwithstanding all his power in verse, was unable to acclimatise the new vehicle, the importance and beauty of which he undoubtedly fully recognised. Having tried the effect of a fourteen-line poem in well-modulated blank verse, he found that he was dissatisfied with the result; equally dissatisfied was he with the quatrains-and-couplet mould of Wyatt and Surrey: and so at last, after continuous experiments, he produced a modification of both the English and the Italian form, retaining something of the rhyme-iteration of the latter along with the couplet-ending of the former: or perhaps he simply adopted this structure from a similar Italian experiment, discerning through translation its seeming appropriateness. That he considered this the best possible mould of the sonnet for the English poet is evident from the fact that in this structure he composed his famous love sonnets, the *Amoretti*. The Spenserian sonnet may be regarded as representing that transitional stage of development which a tropical plant experiences when introduced

into a temperate clime. In this case the actual graft proved short-lived, but the lesson was not lost upon cultivators, in whose hands manifold seed lay ready for germination. Spenser's method was to interlace the quatrains by using the last rhyme-sound of each as the key-note of the next— b^2 , for example, if I may use a musical comparison, constituting the dominant of b^3 and b^5 , as of course c^2 of c^3 and c^5 —and then to clinch those by an independent rhyme-couplet. It will more easily be understood by this formula :—

$$\begin{array}{c} A - B - A - B \\ B - C - B - C \\ C - D - C - D \\ \hline E - E \end{array}$$

But this form pleased the ear neither of his contemporaries nor of his successors : it was suited for gentle tenderness, for a lover's half-assumed langour—but in it neither Dante on the one hand, nor Shakespeare nor Milton on the other, would have found that rhythmical freedom, or rather that amplitude in confinement, which they obtained in the structures they adopted. After Spenser there set in the flood of Elizabethan sonneteering, which culminated in the Shakespearian sonnets. Before mentioning Shakespeare and his immediate forerunners, however, an interesting feature should be noted. This is a fine sonnet foreshadowing what is now called the Miltonic mould, by that great Englishman, Sir Walter Raleigh : though structurally of the Surrey type, it has the Miltonic characteristic of unbroken continuity between octave and sestet. It may be added that the author of *Paradise Lost* modelled his well-known lines on his dead wife on this sonnet by Raleigh.

What is styled the Shakespearian sonnet is so called only out of deference to the great poet who made such noble use of it : in the same way as Petrarca is accredited with the structural form bearing his name. As "the sweete laureate of Italie" had predecessors in Guittone d'Arezzo and Amalricchi, so Shakespeare found that the English

sonnet—as it should be called—having been inefficiently handled by Surrey, discarded by Spenser, taken up and beautified by Sir Philip Sidney (who seemed unable to definitely decide as to what form to adopt), was at last made thoroughly ready for his use by Daniel and Drayton. To show how the so-called Shakespearian sonnet was led up to and how it actually existed in its maturity prior to the splendid poems of the young player-poet, a sonnet by each of these admirable writers may be quoted. But previous thereto it may again be made clear that the English or Shakespearian sonnet is distinctly different from the normal Italian type. Unlike the latter, it is not divided into two systems—though a pause corresponding to that enforced by the separation of octave and sestet is very frequently observed. Instead of having octave and sestet, the Shakespearian sonnet is made up of four elegiac quatrains clinched by a rhymed couplet with a new sound; and, generally, it presents the motive as it were in a transparent sphere, instead of as a cameo with two sides. As regards swiftness of motion, its gain upon the Spenserian, to which it is so closely allied, is great.

Referring, in a chapter dealing with the sonnets of Rossetti, to the two archetypal forms, I wrote some four years ago that “The Shakespearian sonnet is like a red-hot bar being moulded upon a forge till—in the closing couplet—it receives the final clinching blow from the heavy hammer: while the Petrarchan, on the other hand, is like a wind gathering in volume and dying away again immediately on attaining a culminating force.” The anterior simile is the happier: for the second I should now be inclined to substitute—the Petrarchan sonnet is like an oratorio, where the musical divisions are distinct, and where the close is a grand swell, the culmination of the foregoing harmonies. Petrarca himself, in one of his numerous marginalia to his sonnets, remarked that the end should invariably be more harmonious than the beginning, *i.e.*, should be *dominantly borne-in* upon the reader.

In selecting the “Sleep” of Samuel Daniel, I do so not because it is in the true Shakespearian type (as is Drayton’s)

—though he wrote mostly in the latter mould—but because in this example is shown the final transition from an octave of two rhymes to the English archetype as already formulated. It must not be overlooked, however, that he used and used well the Shakespearian form.

TO SLEEP.

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night, *a*
 Brother to Death, in silent darkness born, *ab*
 Relieve my anguish, and restore the light; *a*
 With dark forgetting of my care return, *ab*
 And let the day be time enough to mourn *ab*
 The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth; *a*
 Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn, *ab*
 Without the torment of the night's untruth. *a*
 Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires, *ab*
 To model forth the passions of the morrow; *a*
 Never let rising Sun approve you liars, *ab*
 To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow; *a*
 Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain, *ab*
 And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

The sonnet by Michael Drayton which I shall next quote is not only the finest of Elizabethan sonnets by writers other than Shakespeare, but in condensed passion is equalled only by one or two of those of the great master, and is surpassed by none, either of his or of any later poet:—

A PARTING.

Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part, *a*
 Nay, I have done, you get no more of me; *b*
 And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart, *a*
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free: *b*
 Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows, *c*
 And when we meet at any time again, *d*
 Be it not seen in either of our brows *c*
 That we one jot of former love retain. *d*
 Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath, *e*
 When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies, *f*
 When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death, *e*
 And Innocence is closing up his eyes,— *f*
 Now, if thou would'st, when all have given him over, *g*
 From death to life thou might'st him yet recover! *g*

But it was in Shakespeare's hands that this form of sonnet first became immutably established in our literature. These

magnificent poems—magnificent notwithstanding many minor flaws—must always hold their high place, not only as the personal record of the greatest of our poets, but for the sake of their own consummate beauty and intellectual force. I may repeat the words I wrote in the Introductory Essay to my edition of his *Songs and Sonnets*—"It is because this great master over the passions and follies and heroisms of man has at least once dropped the veil of impersonality that we are so fascinated by the sonnets. Here the musician who has otherwise played for all generations of humanity, pipes a solitary tune of his own life, its love, its devotion, its fervour, its prophetic exaltation, its passion, its despair, its exceeding bitterness. Veritably we are here face to face with 'a splendour amid glooms.'"

Rossetti, the greatest master of sonnet-music posterior to the "starre of poets," declared while expressing his unbounded admiration for Shakespeare's sonnets that "conception—*fundamental brain-work*—is what makes the difference in all art. . . A Shakespearian sonnet is better than the most perfect in form because Shakespeare wrote it." Again, the opinion of so acute a critic and genuine a poet as Mr. Theodore Watts may here be appropriately quoted:—"The quest of the Shakespearian form is not," he writes in his article on "The Sonnet" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "like that of the sonnet of octave and sestet sonority, and, so to speak, metrical counterpoint, but sweetness; and the sweetest of all possible arrangements in English versification is a succession of decasyllabic quatrains in alternate rhymes knit together, and clinched by a couplet—a couplet coming not too far from the initial verse, so as to lose its binding power, and yet not so near the initial verse that the ring of epigram disturbs 'the linked sweetness long drawn out' of this movement, but sufficiently near to shed its influence over the poem back to the initial verse." This is admirably expressed, and true so far as it goes; but to a far wider scope than "sweetness" does the Shakespearian sonnet reach. Having already given a good example of sonnets cast in this mould, it is not necessary to quote another by the chief master of

the English sonnet: still I may give one of the latter's greatest, perhaps *the* greatest of Shakespeare's or any other, which will not only serve as a supreme example of the type, but will demonstrate a capability of impressiveness unsurpassed by any sonnet of Dante or Milton:—

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action ; and till action, lust
Is perjur'd, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight,
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had
Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait
On purpose laid to make the taker mad ;
Mad in pursuit and in possession so ;
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme ;
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe ;
Before, a joy proposed ; behind, a dream.

All this the world well knows ; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

After the sonnets of Shakespeare till those of Milton there is not much to chronicle concerning the history of the sonnet. Its chief intermediate composer was Drummond of Hawthornden, a graceful poet, but assuredly not the master he has again and again been represented to be. His essential weakness may be seen in his inability to adopt any pure mould: his sonnets may either be regarded as English bastards of Italian parentage, or as Italian refugees disguised in a semi-insular costume. Hitherto, and this notwithstanding several noble examples by Shakespeare of a more impersonal scope, most English sonnets were amatory—amatory to such an extent indeed that “sugred sonnettes” became as much the stereotyped medium of lovers’ prayers and complaints as was the border-ballad that of the virile energies of a semi-civilised people. In this state they still were after the close of the Elizabethan period—indeed they were, with the minor poets, fast degenerating into florid and insipid imbecilities. But when Milton recognised the form as one well suited even for the voice which was in due time to chant the rebellion of the Prince of Evil, he took it up to regenerate it. In his hands it “became a trumpet.” Recognising the rhythmical beauty

of the normal Italian type he adopted its rhyme-arrangement, discarding both the English sonnet and all bastard intermediates: but, either from imperfect acquaintance with or understanding of the Italian archetype (which seems improbable, considering the circumstances of his life and the breadth of his culture), or out of definite intention, he did not regard as essential or appropriate the break in the melody between octave and sestet. And here, according to Mr. Mark Pattison, he "missed the very end and aim of the Petrarchan scheme." He considered—so we may infer—that the English sonnet should be like a revolving sphere, every portion becoming continuously visible, with no break in the continuity of thought or expression anywhere apparent. Sir Henry Taylor described this characteristic well as the absence of point in the evolution of the idea. I need not quote one of these "soul-animating strains," as Wordsworth sympathetically styled Milton's sonnets, so familiar as they are to all lovers of English poetry: but I may point to an admirable sonnet in the Miltonic mould in this volume, which readers may examine with advantage—*viz.*, the impressive "Democracy Downtrodden" of Mr. William Michael Rossetti.

A second reference may here appropriately be made to Mr. Hall Caine's claim for the inherent independence of the English sonnet. This gentleman is so accomplished and generally so acute a critic that I differ from him only after the most careful consideration of his arguments. To the independent existence of the English sonnet as such I am, of course, as will have been seen, no opponent; but there is a difference between a poetic form being national and its being indigenous. An English skate, for example, is at once recognisable from that of any other northern country, has, in a word, the seal of nationality impressed on its familiar aspect; but every one knows that originally that delightful means towards "ice-flight" came to us from the Dutch, and was not the invention of our countrymen. So is it with the national sonnet. Wyatt and Surrey did not invent the English form of sonnet, they introduced it from Italy; Spenser played with and altered it; Shakespeare as

it were translated it into our literature ; Drummond—half-Italian, half-English, regarded critically—used it variously ; the Elizabethan sonneteers piped through it their real or imaginary amatory woes ; and at last came Milton, and made it shine newly, as if he had cut his diamond in such a way that only one luminous light were visible to us. The Shakespearian or English sonnet is no bastard form, nor is the Miltonic ; each is derivative, one more so than the other to all appearance—and the only bastard forms are those which do not belong to the pure types—those sonnets, for instance, which have the octave regular and a sestet consisting of a quatrain and a couplet, or those which, like the *Love-Sonnets of Proteus*, are irregular throughout. Mr. Hall Caine was desirous to remove the charge of illegitimacy against the English sonnet : where I differ from him is only that I can see no real basis for bringing up the charge against the pure types at all.

What is known as the Contemporary, and sometimes as the Natural sonnet, was first formulated by Mr. Theodore Watts. With the keen insight that characterises the critical work of this writer, and that no less gives point to his imaginative faculty, he recognised not only the absolute metrical beauty of the Petrarchan type, but also that it was based on a deep melodic law, the law which may be observed in the flow and ebb of a wave ; and, indeed, the sonnet in question was composed at a little seaside village in Kent, while the writer and a friend were basking on the shore. It was Mr. Watts who first explained the reason why the separate and complete solidarity of the octave was so essential to perfect harmony, finding in this metrical arrangement nothing less than the action of the same law that is manifested in the inflowing wave solidly gathering into curving volume, culminating in one great pause, and then sweeping out again from the shore. This is not only a fine conception, but it was accepted at once by Rossetti, Mr. J. A. Symonds, Mr. Mark Pattison, Mr. Caine, Karl Lentzner (in his treatise on the sonnet before mentioned), and by others who have given special attention to the sonnet. “The striking metaphorical symbol,” says Mr. J.

A. Symonds, "drawn by Mr. Theodore Watts from the observation of the swelling and declining wave can even, in some examples, be applied to sonnets on the Shakespearian model, for, as a wave may fall gradually or abruptly, so the sonnet may sink with stately volume or with precipitate subsidence to its close." In France, the revival of the sonnet has been only less marked than in England, and among French poets it is also now recognised as indubitable that the octave must be in the normal mould, and that the sestet should have no more doubtful variation than a commencing couplet. Mr. Theodore Watts' theory naturally excited much comment; and his sonnet on the Sonnet, wherein that theory was first formulated, may be appropriately quoted here.

THE SONNET'S VOICE.

(*A metrical lesson by the sea shore.*)

Yon silvery billows breaking on the beach
 Fall back in foam beneath the star-shine clear,
 The while my rhymes are murmuring in your ear
 A restless lore like that the billows teach;
 For on these sonnet-waves my soul would reach
 From its own depths, and rest within you, dear,
 As, through the billowy voices yearning here,
 Great nature strives to find a human speech.

A sonnet is a wave of melody:
 From heaving waters of the impassioned soul
 A billow of tidal music one and whole
 Flows in the "octave;" then returning free,
 Its ebbing surges in the "sestet" roll
 Back to the deeps of Life's tumultuous sea.

a
b
c
d
e
f
g
h
i
j
k
l
m
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o
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t
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v
w
x
y
z

At the same time Mr. Watts is no mere formalist, and he has himself expressed his conviction both in *The Athenæum* and in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, that the same form is not always the best for every subject. I, for my part, think that, broadly speaking, the Contemporary Sonnet, as formulated by Mr. Watts, may be regarded in a dual light. When it is a love-sonnet, or the emotion is tender rather than forceful, the music sweet rather than dignified, it will be found to correspond to the law of *flow* and *ebb*—i.e., of the inflowing solid wave (the octave), the

pause, and then the broken resilient wash of the wave (the sestet): when, on the other hand, it is intellectually or passionately forceful rather than tender or pathetic, dignified and with impressive amplitude of imagery rather than strictly beautiful, then it will correspond to the law of *ebb* and *flow*—*i.e.*, of the steady resilient wave-wash till the culminating moment when the billow has curved and is about to pour shoreward again (the octave), and of the solid inflowing wave, sweeping strongly forward (the sestet)—in Keat's words

Swelling loudly
Up to its climax, and then dying proudly.

Examples of either will be found among the sonnets in this volume, *e.g.*, "The Dream" (p. 247) of *flow* and *ebb*, "Natura Benigna" (p. 245) of *ebb* and *flow*.

It is thus evident that the contemporary type is no variation from the Petrarchan, but is simply an artistically understood development thereof.

Readers will already have gathered that there can thus only be three genuine sonnet-types.

THE PETRARCHAN or NATURAL SONNET (comprehending the *Contemporary*).

THE ENGLISH or SHAKESPEARIAN SONNET.

THE MILTONIC SONNET (any Sonnet, whether in the Petrarchan or Shakespearian mould, with unbroken continuity, metrically and otherwise, in its presentation).

In the wide scope thus afforded no poet can with justice complain of too rigid limitations; such objection-making must simply be an exemplification of the well-known saying as to the workman and his tools. To these, moreover, may be addressed Capel Loft's words (who, however, adapted them from Menzini)—"No Procrustes has obliged you to be lopped to the measure of this bed: Parnassus will not be in ruins even if you should not publish a sonnet."

I will not here attempt any adequate survey of the history of the sonnet in England from Milton to the present day. A cursory glance must be sufficient.

With Milton the Italian influence in our literature waned, and that of France (inaugurated by Dryden) took its place. A corresponding change in the poetic temperament rapidly took place.

After Milton the sonnet almost languished out of existence in this country. Many years after the great Puritan poet was laid in his grave, Gray wrote an often-praised (but to me, I must confess, a very indifferent) sonnet on the death of "Mr. Richard West," and Mason and Warton several of fair quality. Cowper, who died as may be remembered in the last year of the eighteenth century, wrote one fine poem of this class to Mary Unwin. Gradually the sonnet began to awake from its poetic hibernation, and though one or two women writers not altogether unworthily handled it, and though William Roscoe and Egerton Brydges even used it with moderate success, the first real breath of spring came in the mild advent of William Lisle Bowles. His sonnets move us now hardly at all; but when we remember the season of their production we may well regard them with more kindly liberality. Bowles was born just eight years before William Wordsworth, to whom, more than any one else, is due the great revival and increasing study and appreciation of the sonnet. Coleridge wrote no fine sonnets, though he just missed writing one of supreme excellence (*vide Notes*). Blanco White concentrated all his poetic powers in one great effort, and wrote a sonnet which will live as long as the language, as in French literature Félix Arvers will be remembered always for his unique example, that beautiful sonnet commencing "*Mon âme a son secret, ma vie a son mystère.*" Leigh Hunt, true poet in his degree as he was, did truer service by his admirable efforts in critical literature towards the popularisation of the sonnet; and after him (by "after" reference is made to birth-sequence) came a constantly increasing number, the chief of whom will be found represented in this volume—among the most important being Sir Aubrey de Vere, little known, but a true poet and a fine sonneteer, Byron (who wrote some half-dozen compositions of this class, and wrote them well too, notwithstanding his real or pretended dislike of the

form), Barry Cornwall, Shelley (whose "Ozymandias" is a fine poem but not a fine sonnet), and Keats. Though Keats has never been and probably never will be a really popular poet, his influence on other poets and on poetic temperaments generally has been quite incalculable. Some of his sonnets are remarkable for their power and beauty, while others are indifferent and a few are poor. With all his love for the beauty of isolated poetic lines—music condensed into an epigram more concise than the Greeks ever uttered—as, for example, his own splendid verse,

There is a budding morrow in mid-night—

and with all that sense of verbal melody which he manifested so remarkably in his odes, it is strange that in his sonnets he should so often be at fault in true harmony. Even the beautiful examples which are included in this anthology afford instances of this; as in "Ailsa Rock," where the penultimate word of the ninth line and the penultimate word of the tenth (not forming part of the rhyme-sound, the two terminals indeed being antagonistic) are identical: as in the "Elgin Marbles," where "*weak*" midway in the first line has an unpleasing assonantal relation with "*sleep*," the terminal of the second line: as in "To Homer," where after the beautiful eleventh line already quoted, ending in "*mid-night*," there succeeds "*sight*" midway in the twelfth. These are genuine discords, and those who are unable to perceive them simply prove their deficiency in ear. Born a year later than Keats, Hartley Coleridge, the poetic son of a greater father, finely fulfilled the impulse that had come to him from Wordsworth, making an abiding name for himself through his sonnet work alone. His "Birth of Speech"—as I have styled one of his best-known but unnamed sonnets—is a fine example of a sonnet in the Miltonic mould. Thomas Hood, that true poet—so little understood by the public generally—not only wrote some fine sonnets, but wrote two of special excellence, one of them ("Silence") taking place in the very front rank. Ten years younger than Hood was Charles Tennyson-Turner. Charming, even perma-

nently beautiful as many of his sonnet-stanzas are, their form cannot be admired: if we have been correct in considering the so-called pure types to be the true expression of certain metrical laws, then certainly these compositions of his are not sonnets, but only (to repeat Mr. Ashcroft Noble's appropriate term for similar productions) sonnet-stanzas. The rhythm is much broken up, and the charm of assured expectancy is destroyed. But a greater poet than Tennyson-Turner, true singer as the latter was, came into the world about the same time. No more impassioned soul ever found expression in rhythmical speech than Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and there is nothing in her poetry which is finer than that famous love-record, the so-called "Sonnets from the Portuguese." Impetuous as was her genius, hasty and frequently careless as she was in production, she never found the archetypal sonnet too circumscribed for her. The pathetic beauty, the fascinating personality, the pure poetry displayed in these sonnets, have touched many and many a heart since the tired singer was laid to rest under the cypresses not far from that beloved river whose flow she had so often followed in thought down to the far-off Pisan sea. Only those who have thoroughly studied contemporary poetry, and not only the poetry which is familiar to many but that also which is quite unknown, and by minor writers of no reputation or likelihood of reputation, can realise the potency of Mrs. Browning's influence, especially among women. Even to mention by name all those who have charmed, or interested, or transiently attracted us by their sonnets throughout the last fifty years, would take up much more space than I have to spare, nor can I even refer in detail to those who are no longer with us. One name, however, stands out from all others since Wordsworth and Mrs. Browning, like a pine-tree out of a number of graceful larches. Dante Gabriel Rossetti is not only one of the great poets of the century, but the one English poet whose sonnet-work can genuinely be weighed in the balance with that of Shakespeare and with that of Wordsworth. No influence is at present more marked than his: its stream is narrower than that of Tenny-

son and Browning, but the current is deep, and its fertilising waters have penetrated far and wide into the soil. The author of *The House of Life* thus holds a remarkable place in the literary and artistic history of the second Victorian epoch. No critic of this poet's work will have any true grasp of it who does not recognise that "Rossetti" signifies something of greater import than the beautiful productions of one man—the historian of the brilliant period in question will work in the dark if he be unable to perceive one of the chief well-springs of the flood, if he should fail to recognise the relationship between certain radical characteristics of the time and the man who did so much to inaugurate or embody them.

Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Mrs. Browning, Rossetti. Italy herself cannot present a finer body of poetry in the mould of this form than is to be found in the collective sonnets of these great English writers. As to the vexed question of priority among these sonneteers, I need not attempt to gauge the drift of capable opinion. For myself—and this I set forward the less reluctantly as I know the opinion is shared by so many better judges than I claim to be—I would simply say (1) that the three greatest sonneteers of our language seem to me to be Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Rossetti; (2) that the two greatest, regarding their work en masse and not by this or that sonnet, or this or that group of sonnets, seem to me to be Shakespeare and Rossetti; and (3) that no poet of our own or any language could show ten sonnets equal in breadth of thought, verity of poetry, and beauty of expression to the ten greatest of Wordsworth. In "fundamental brain-work," to use Rossetti's phrase, or in the composition of "Deep-brained sonnettes," to quote Shakespeare's, these two poets stand above Wordsworth; but in impersonal humanity Shakespeare rarely, Rossetti a little less rarely, approach the highest reach of one who in general is their poetic inferior. For what great poet at his poorest is so poor as Wordsworth: in what other great poetic nature has there ever been so abundant a leaven of the prosaic? One of the chief poets in our country, his garden has more desert-spaces in it than any other, and the

supreme beauties are almost lost to all who have no guide to the labyrinth. But these super-excellent treasures, when once found, how we are carried away by their exquisite perfume, their extreme beauty: we forget the sand and the many weeds, and for a time believe that in no other of the many gardens of verse blooms there such loveliness, breathes there such fragrance. But in one thing Rossetti is greater than Wordsworth, greater even than Shakespeare, and that is in weight and volume of sound. As a wind-swayed pine seems literally to shake off music from its quivering branches, so do his sonnets throb with and disperse deep-sounding harmonies. What sonority of pure poetic speech there is in this from "The Dark Glass":—

Not I myself know all my love for thee :
 How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh
 To morrow's dower by gage of yesterday?
 Shall birth and death and all dark names that be
 As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,
 Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray ;
 And shall my sense pierce love,—the last relay
 And ultimate outpost of eternity?

or in this from "Lovesight":—

O love, my love ! If I no more should see
 Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
 Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
 How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
 The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
 The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

How transcendently Shakespearian this beautiful opening of the sestet of the sonnet on page 189:—

The sunrise blooms and withers on the hill
 Like any hillflower ; and the noblest troth
 Dies here to dust !

On the sonnet-work of living writers I need not dwell, especially as a short note accompanies the name of each author as sequently referred to in the Appendix: but I may here add a few general remarks thereupon as represented in this collection. When I first thought of making this anthology, it was my intention to strictly exclude any sonnet

not belonging to one of the pure types, Petrarchan, Shakespearian, or Miltonic (the regular and not the illegitimate Miltonic, of course), but ere long I discovered that this aim, admirable in a collection covering the whole reach of our sonnet literature, would not at all adequately represent all that is worthy in that portion of contemporary or nineteenth century poetry which is cast in the fourteen-line mould. So I came to the conclusion that it would be as well, not only for the reason just stated, but also in order that each reader might be placed in a position to form individual judgment, to include a large number of irregular sonnets; and that I have been catholic enough in selection, I do not think even the most ardent controversialist opponent would deny! Moreover, it seems to me that after careful comparison, allowing the brain and the ear to act conjointly, the conclusion will be come to even from this limited anthology that the pure moulds are the best, and that the so-called arbitrary restrictions of this poetic vehicle should be strictly preserved.

My second principle in selection was—Individuality, with distinct poetic value: and in accordance with this I endeavoured to choose. For the selection of nine-tenths of the sonnets I am alone responsible, but in a few instances I have yielded to the special request of a contributor and substituted some other for the one already chosen, or have inserted a sonnet which I could not honestly endorse as specially excellent. Instances of the latter are so extremely rare, however, that the matter need scarcely have been mentioned.

My third principle was—Adequacy of sonnet-motive. As out of every five hundred sonnets there are at most one hundred genuinely in conformity therewith, it may be imagined that I do not claim that each of the two hundred and seventy following examples has this characteristic—but I certainly think that the majority have.

Surely it is not extravagant to entertain the hope that this collection will enlighten many as to the great beauty of the sonnet as a poetical vehicle—that it will make manifest how well it is fitted for the enshrinement of the noblest as

well as the most passionate or tender emotion—that it will prove how large a quantity of the finest poetic work of this century is therein embodied—and that it will serve to convince the reader of the great future the sonnet still has before it?

For a poem does not require to be an epic to be great, any more than a man need be a giant to be noble. When a fine thing is adequately and completely stated, it does not gain by being embedded in an environment too great for it, like an amethyst in a great boulder of quartz. In the words of an early sonnet commentator—"like the small statue by the chisel of Lysippus, they demonstrate that the *idea of greatness* may be excited independently of the magnitude of size." Look at the majesty of this imagery—

" Even as, heavy-curved,
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
So shall Time be ; and as the void car, hurled
Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world :
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
It shall be sought and not found anywhere : "

(p. 193.)

or at the amplitude of that magnificent sonnet, "The Sun-God" (p. 55): or at the spaciousness of that entitled "The Sublime" (p. 22).

Only those who have undertaken some task similar to this which I have accomplished know the great labour that is involved. Hundreds of sonnets have to be read and judged ere a good selection be made, and then this selection has to be sifted, and sonnet weighed against sonnet, and a score of contrarities to be considered ere the final choice be made. Then the correspondence, and illustrative notes, and variorum readings, and other matters conspire to make the editorial task an eminently unenviable one for the time being. It is, therefore, with genuine gratitude that I acknowledge in this place my indebtedness to all the living writers who are here represented, for their courtesy in leaving me freedom to make my own selections, and for various other methods of welcome assistance. If there are any who have not had direct communication with me, I

trust they will attribute my negligence not to any indifference or discourtesy, but either to ignorance of the omission, or to some special urgency.

As to the arrangement of the sonnets: it will be seen at a glance that they are placed according to the alphabetical sequence of authors' names—because I found that a greater variety and freshness could so be given to the collection than by any other means.

When it is fully realised that a sonnet must be the complete development of a single motive, and that it must at once be reticent and ample, it will be understood how true is that line of Boileau which is quoted on the title-page. Sonnets are like waves of the sea, each on a small scale that which the ocean is on a large. "A sonnet is a moment's monument," wrote Rossetti, in one of his own compositions—not improbably unconsciously reproducing that line of A. de Musset, in his *Impromptu en réponse à cette question: Qu'est-ce que la poésie?*—"Eterniser peut-être un rêve d'un instant." And it is to indulge in no mere metaphysical subtlety to say that life can be as ample in one divine moment as in an hour, or a day, or a year. And there is a wide world of sensation open to the sonneteer if he will but exercise not only a wise reticence, but also vivid perception and acute judgment. As the writer in *The Quarterly Review* has well said, "the sonnet might almost be called the alphabet of the human heart, since almost every kind of emotion has been expressed, or attempted to be expressed in it." And in this, more than in any other poetic form, it is well for the would-be composer to study, not only every line and every word, but every vowel and every part of each word, endeavouring to obtain the most fit phrase, the most beautiful and original turn to the expression—to be, like Keats, "misers of sound and syllable." And in no form is revision more advisable: in none is it less likely to be harmful, for pre-eminently a sonnet is a form embodying emotion remembered in tranquillity, as Wordsworth defined poetry generally. We know that Petrarca has himself recorded how he passed the file athwart his handiwork over and over again, and but rarely,

even then, saw the gem leave his cabinet without reluctance—how he wrote not hurriedly, and issued with still greater circumspection, letting each sonnet, as Leigh Hunt expresses it, lie polishing in his mind for months together, like a pebble on the sea-shore. And not less enamoured of perfection for perfection's sake was the greatest sonneteer of our own time, every one of whose sonnets was passed again and again through the white-heat of imaginative and critical comparative study: in Rossetti's own words, the first and highest quality of finish in poetic execution "is that where the work has been all mentally 'cartooned,' as it were, beforehand, by a process intensely conscious, but patient and silent—an occult evolution of life."

Some score or more of essential rules might well be formulated for the behoof, not only of those who wish to write in the sonnet-form, but also of those who do not even yet fully realise how many things go to the making of a really good sonnet. These regulations, main and minor, are to be found fully set forth by Leigh Hunt and by the late Mark Pattison, but a complete statement of points to be observed is here now unnecessary. It will suffice if I set forth the ten absolutely essential rules for a good sonnet.

- I. The sonnet must consist of fourteen decasyllabic lines.
- II. Its octave, or major system, whether or not this be marked by a pause in the cadence after the eighth line, must (unless cast in the Shakespearian mould) follow a prescribed arrangement in the rhyme-sounds—namely, the first, fourth, fifth, and eighth lines must rhyme on the same sound, and the second, third, sixth, and seventh on another.
- III. Its sestet, or minor system, may be arranged with more freedom, but a rhymed couplet at the close is *only* allowable when the form is the English or Shakespearian.
- IV. No terminal should also occur in any portion of any other line in the same system; and the rhyme-sounds (1) of the octave should be harmoniously at variance, and (2) the rhyme-sounds of the sestet should be entirely distinct in intonation from those of the octave. Thus (1) no octave should be based on a monotonous system of nominally distinct rhymes, such as *sea—futurity—eternity—be—flee—adversity—inevitably—free*.

- V. It must have no slovenliness of diction, no weak or indeterminate terminations, no vagueness of conception, and no obscurity.
- VI. It must be absolutely complete in itself—*i.e.*, it must be the evolution of *one* thought, or *one* emotion, or *one* poetically-apprehended fact.
- VII. It should have the characteristic of apparent inevitableness, and in expression be ample, yet reticent. It must not be forgotten that dignity and repose are essential qualities of a true sonnet.
- VIII. The continuity of the thought, idea, or emotion must be unbroken throughout.
- IX. Continuous sonority must be maintained from the first phrase to the last.
- X. The end must be more impressive than the commencement—the close must not be inferior to, but must rather transcend what has gone before.

If these rules are adequately fulfilled, there will be every chance of the sonnet proving a super-excellent one. But there must be no mere music, no mere sonority, no fourteen-line descriptions of aspects of nature in the manner of Wordsworth in his Duddon-sonnets, for example. Beneath the intermingling lights of apt simile and imaginative metaphor, beneath the melody of vowels and words melting into the melody of the line, and the harmony of the due proportion of the lines themselves from first to last, there must lie, clear and undisturbed by its environment, the dominating motive—the idea, the thought, the emotion.

But after all these remarks upon technicalities—after all this talk about octaves and sestet, vowels and consonants, I must not let the reader suppose that such matters form anything more than the mere scaffolding of poetry. Whether in sonnet-form or in any other guise, poetry must always “reflect the life of Nature or the life of Man, else it is nothing worth.”

I write these last words not far from the sombre shadow of Ben Ledi—the Hill of God, as the name signifies—sombre notwithstanding the white garment of snow in which it is enveloped. The stream flowing far beneath it is apparently

one sheet of dark ice ; not a familiar object is in view, and nothing is audible save the occasional snapping of a frost-bitten branch, or that strangest of all sounds, the north wind ruffling the snow-drifts on the upper hill-slopes ; not a living thing is visible, though far up, on a vast expanse of unbroken white, a tiny blue-black shadow moves like a sweeping scimitar, and I know that an eagle is passing from peak to lonely peak.

Away—for a brief space—from the turmoil and many conflicting interests of the great city, “mother of joys and woes,” I realise the more clearly how much more beautiful and reposeful and stimulative Nature is than any imitation of her, how much greater Life than its noblest artistic manifestation. I realise, also, how true it is that the sincerest poetic function—for sonneteer as for lyricist or epicist—is not the creation of what is strange or fanciful, but the imaginative interpretation of what is familiar, so that a thing be made new to us : in the words of an eminent critic, Mr. Leslie Stephen, “the highest triumph of style is to say what everybody has been thinking in such a way as to make it new.”

Here, also, in this soothing solitude, this dignified, this majestic silence, this secret and “holy lair” of her who is, the poet tells us, *Natura Benigna* or *Natura Maligna* according to the eyes that gaze and the ears that hearken, it seems as if all that is morbid and unreal and merely fanciful were indeed petty enough, and that perfect sanity of mind is as essential to the creation of any great and lasting mental product as perfect robustness to the due performance of any prolonged and fatiguing physical endurance. In the words of Mr. Stephen, the highest poetry, like the noblest morality, is the product of a thoroughly healthy mind.

WILLIAM SHARP.

January, 1886.

NOTE TO THIS EDITION.

(Twenty-fifth to Thirtieth Thousand.)

THIS Anthology has gone through so many editions, in various forms, since its publication considerably less than two years ago, that I am tempted to add a word to this latest re-issue.

When I commenced the very arduous, if pleasant, task of reading and selection, it was my intention to compile an anthology wherein no example should contravene the structural laws of the Petrarchan, Shakespearian, or Miltonic forms. But though an anthology compiled on this principle would have had indubitable interest and value, I arrived ere long at the conviction that the end I had in view would be best served by rendering the collection a thoroughly representative one—one, so to say, wherein would appear some of the finest sonnet-flowers from the innumerable gardens in the Eden of contemporary poetry, irrespective of individual variations from perfect types.

The result, as it appears to me, is my justification. One or two of my specialist critics, naturally more alert to the exigencies of form than inclined to condone the exercise of a freedom which might mislead many readers, have regretted—notwithstanding potent claims of poetic worth—the inclusion of examples which perpetrate such enormities as a three-rhyme octave or a Petrarchan sestet ending with the Shakespearian rhymed-couplet. Yet, since my aim was not so much to gratify the specialist as to cultivate and enhance the popular appreciation of one of the most dignified and beautiful of our metrical forms, it is clear that a thoroughly-comprehensive selection, comprising every reasonable variation, would, better than any other, enable the ordinary reader to judge for himself as to the merits of this or that

type, and prevent the formation of judgments uncritical because of restricted familiarity with all varieties of the form.

From the very extensive correspondence which has resulted from the publication of "*Sonnets of this Century*," I have obtained some valuable—or, at least, suggestive—hints. Judging therefrom, I find that very few readers indeed have so sensitive an ear as to be disturbed by, or to be even conscious of, such an irregularity as the occurrence of a third rhyme (*6th-7th lines*) in the orthodox octave. Many, including some who are themselves excellent sonnet-writers, even prefer the variation—considering that a greater lightness, a more delicate grace, is the outcome of freedom from the conventional system. To this view the objection is, that one great charm of the sonnet lies in the expectancy wherewith the ear awaits the metrical evolution (after being prepared, by a glance of the eye, for either the Petrarchan, Shakespearian, or Miltonic form), and the consequent jar and disappointment when a new rhyme is unexpectedly introduced. However, a widely-held opinion as to the immateriality of this structural licence certainly, at any rate, justifies the inclusion of occasional irregular sonnets in an anthology such as this.

Again, I find that the English, or Shakespearian, is preferred to any other sonnet-form for the direct expression of the passions; and the orthodox, or Petrarchan, for that of the reflective, vicarious, and intellectual emotions. This seems to me a circumstance, not only of interest to all who care for the subject, but of valuable import to those who are watching for, and speculating upon, the imminent developments of our poetic literature.

To my innumerable correspondents I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks for much kind and appreciative criticism, and for many interesting suggestions—only regretting that the brevity of my leisure has prevented me from acting upon the latter, or from adequately acknowledging the former.

W. S.

NEW ATHENÆUM CLUB,
PALL MALL (EAST), *October 31, 1887.*

SONNETS OF THIS CENTURY.

*Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honours; with this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief;
The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow; a glow-worm lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery-land
To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!*

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

I.

EASTER EVE.

I SAW two women weeping by the tomb
Of one new buried, in a fair green place
Bowered with shrubs ;—the eve retained no trace
Of aught that day performed,—but the faint gloom
Of dying day was spread upon the sky ;—
The moon was broad and bright above the wood ;—
The distance sounded of a multitude,
Music and shout and mingled revelry.
At length came gleaming through the thicket shade
Helmet and casque—and a steel-arm'd band
Watched round the sepulchre in solemn stand ;
The night-word passed, from man to man conveyed ;
And I could see those women rise and go
Under the dark trees moving sad and slow.

II.

AUTUMNAL SONNET.

Now Autumn's fire burns slowly along the woods,
And day by day the dead leaves fall and melt,
And night by night the monitory blast
Wails in the key-hole, telling how it pass'd
O'er empty fields, or upland solitudes,
Or grim wide wave ; and now the power is felt
Of melancholy, tenderer in its moods
Than any joy indulgent summer dealt.

Dear friends, together in the glimmering eve,
Pensive and glad, with tones that recognise
The soft invisible dew in each one's eyes,
It may be, somewhat thus we shall have leave
To walk with memory,—when distant lies
Poor Earth, where we were wont to live and grieve.

III.

A DAY-DREAM'S REFLECTION.

(*"On the Sunny Shore."*)

CHEQUER'D with woven shadows as I lay
Among the grass, blinking the watery gleam,
I saw an Echo-Spirit in his bay
Most idly floating in the noontide beam.
Slow heaved his filmy skiff, and fell, with sway
Of ocean's giant pulsing, and the Dream,
Buoyed like the young moon on a level stream
Of greenish vapour at decline of day,
Swam airily, watching the distant flocks
Of sea-gulls, whilst a foot in careless sweep
Touched the clear-trembling cool with tiny shocks,
Faint-circling ; till at last he dropt asleep,
Lull'd by the hush-song of the glittering deep,
Lap-lapping drowsily the heated rocks.

IV.

AFTER SUNSET.

THE vast and solemn company of clouds
Around the Sun's death, lit, incarnadined,
Cool into ashy wan ; as Night enshrouds
The level pasture, creeping up behind
Through voiceless vales, o'er lawn and purpled hill
And hazèd mead, her mystery to fulfil.
Cows low from far-off farms ; the loitering wind
Sighs in the hedge, you hear it if you will,—
Tho' all the wood, alive atop with wings
Lifting and sinking through the leafy nooks,
Seethes with the clamour of a thousand rooks.
Now every sound at length is hush'd away.
These few are sacred moments. One more Day
Drops in the shadowy gulf of bygone things.

V.

EAST LONDON.

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited ;
I met a preacher there I knew, and said :
 " Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene ? "
 " Bravely," said he ; " for I of late have been
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*"
O human soul ! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee and to right thee if thou roam,
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night !
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

VI.

SHAKESPEARE.

OTHERS abide our question—Thou art free.

We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge ! For the loftiest hill
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of Mortality ;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-schooled, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst walk on earth unguess'd at.—Better so !

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

VII.

IMMORTALITY.

FOIL'D by our fellow men, depress'd, outworn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, *Patience! in another life*, we say,
The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne!

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor routed leavings? or will they,
Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,
Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun!
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

VIII.

LOVE'S BLINDNESS.

Now do I know that Love is blind, for I
Can see no beauty on this beauteous earth,
No life, no light, no hopefulness, no mirth,
Pleasure nor purpose, when thou art not nigh.
Thy absence exiles sunshine from the sky,
Seres Spring's maturity, checks Summer's birth,
Leaves linnet's pipe as sad as plover's cry,
And makes me in abundance find but dearth.
But when thy feet flutter the dark, and thou
With orient eyes dawnest on my distress,
Suddenly sings a bird on every bough,
The heavens expand, the earth grows less and less,
The ground is buoyant as the ether now,
And all looks lovely in thy loveliness.

IX.

LOVE'S WISDOM.

Now on the summit of Love's topmost peak
Kiss we and part ; no further can we go :
And better death than we from high to low
Should dwindle or decline from strong to weak.
We have found all, there is no more to seek ;
All have we proved, no more is there to know ;
And time could only tutor us to eke
Out rapture's warmth with custom's afterglow.
We cannot keep at such a height as this ;
For even straining souls like ours inhale
But once in life so rarefied a bliss.
What if we lingered till love's breath should fail !
Heaven of my Earth ! one more celestial kiss,
Then down by separate pathways to the vale.

X.

UNSEASONABLE SNOWS.

THE leaves have not yet gone ; then why do ye come,
O white flakes falling from a dusky cloud ?
But yesterday my garden-plot was proud
With uncut sheaves of ripe chrysanthemum.
Some trees the winds have stripped ; but look on some
'Neath double load of snow and foliage bowed,
Unnatural Winter fashioning a shroud
For Autumn's burial ere its pulse be numb.
Yet Nature plays not an inhuman part :
In her, our own vicissitudes we trace.
Do we not cling to our accustomed place,
Though journeying Death have beckoned us to start ?
And faded smiles oft linger in the face,
While grief's first flakes fall silent on the heart !

XI.

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

WITHIN the hollow silence of the night
I lay awake and listened. I could hear
Planet with punctual planet chiming clear,
And unto star star cadencing aright.
Nor these alone: cloistered from deafening sight,
All things that are made music to my ear:
Hushed woods, dumb caves, and many a soundless mere,
With Arctic mains in rigid sleep locked tight.
But ever with this chant from shore and sea,
From singing constellation, humming thought,
And Life through Time's stops blowing variously,
A melancholy undertone was wrought;
And from its boundless prison-house I caught
The awful wail of lone Eternity.

XII.

OLD YEAR LEAVES.

THE leaves which in the autumn of the year
Fall auburn-tinted, leaving reft and bare
Their parent trees, in many a sheltered lair
Where Winter waits and watches, cold, austere,
Will lie in drifts ; and when the snowdrops cheer
The woodland shadows, still the leaves are there,
Though through the glades the balmy southern air
And birds and boughs proclaim that Spring is here.

So lost hopes severed by the stress of life
Lie all unburied yet before our eyes,
Though none but we regard their mute decay ;
And ever amid this stir and moil and strife
Fresh aims and growing purposes arise
Above the faded hopes of yesterday.

XIII.

LOVE'S DEPTH.

Love's height is easy scaling ; skies allure ;
Who feels the day-warmth needs must find it fair ;
Strong eagles ride the lofty sunlit air,
Risking no rivals while their wings endure.
Yet is thy noblest still thy least secure,
And failing thee—shall then thy love despair ?
Shall not thy heart more holily prepare
Some depth unfathomable,—perfect-pure ?

Say that to thee there come Love's dreadful call
The downward swiftness of thy Best to see ;
Say that he sin or sicken, what of thee ?
Are thine arms deeper yet to stay his fall ?
Scarcely love's utmost may in heaven be ;
To hell it reacheth so 'tis love at all.

XIV.

WISHES OF YOUTH.

GAILY and greenly let my seasons run :
And should the war-winds of the world uproot
The sanctities of life, and its sweet fruit
Cast forth as fuel for the fiery sun ;
The dews be turned to ice—fair days begun
In peace wear out in pain, and sounds that suit
Despair and discord keep Hope's harp-string mute ;
Still let me live as Love and Life were one :
Still let me turn on earth a child-like gaze,
And trust the whispered charities that bring
Tidings of human truth ; with inward praise
Watch the weak motion of each common thing
And find it glorious—still let me raise
On wintry wrecks an altar to the Spring.

XV.

THE DEAD.

THE dead abide with us! Though stark and cold
Earth seems to grip them, they are with us still.
They have forged our chains of being for good or ill;
And their invisible hands these hands yet hold.
Our perishable bodies are the mould
In which their strong imperishable will—
Mortality's deep yearning to fulfil—
Hath grown incorporate through dim time untold.

Vibrations infinite of life in death,
As a star's travelling light survives its star!
So may we hold our lives, that when we are
The fate of those who then will draw this breath,
They shall not drag us to their judgment-bar,
And curse the heritage which we bequeath.

XVI.

CLEAVE THOU THE WAVES.

CLEAVE thou the waves that weltering to and fro
Surge multitudinous. The eternal Powers
Of sun, moon, stars, the air, the hurrying hours,
The winged winds, the still dissolving show
Of clouds in calm or storm, for ever flow
Above thee ; while the abysmal sea devours
The untold dead insatiate, where it lowers
O'er glooms unfathom'd, limitless, below.

No longer on the golden-fretted sands,
Where many a shallow tide abortive chafes,
Mayst thou delay ; life onward sweeping blends
With far-off heaven : the dauntless one who braves
The perilous flood with calm unswerving hands,
The elements sustain : cleave thou the waves.

XVII.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

ALONE—with one fair star for company,
The loveliest star among the hosts of night,
While the grey tide ebbs with the ebbing light—
I pace along the darkening wintry sea.
Now round the yule-log and the glittering tree
Twinkling with festive tapers, eyes as bright
Sparkle with Christmas joys and young delight,
As each one gathers to his family.

But I—a waif on earth where'er I roam—
Uprooted with life's bleeding hopes and fears
From that one heart that was my heart's sole home,
Feel the old pang pierce through the severing years,
And as I think upon the years to come
That fair star trembles through my falling tears.

XVIII.

AN EXHORTATION.

WHY do we fret at the inconstancy
Of our frail hearts, which cannot always love ?
Time rushes onward, and we mortals move
Like waifs upon a river, neither free
To halt or hurry. Sweet, if destiny
Throws us together for an hour, a day,
In the backwater of this quiet bay,
Let us rejoice. Before us lies the sea,
Where we must all be lost in spite of love.
We dare not stop to question. Happiness
Lies in our hand unsought, a treasure trove.
Time has short patience of man's vain distress ;
And fate grows angry at too long delay,
And floods rise fast, and we are swept away.

XIX.

VANITAS VANITATIS.

LAME, impotent conclusion to youth's dreams
Vast as all heaven ! See, what glory lies
Entangled here in these base stratagems,
What virtue done to death ! O glorious sighs,
Sublime beseechings, high cajoleries,
Fond wraths, brave raptures, all that sometime was
Our daily bread of gods beneath the skies,
How are ye ended, in what utter loss !
Time was, time is, and time is yet to come,
Till even time itself shall have an end.
These were eternal—and behold, a tomb.
Come, let us laugh and eat and drink. God send
What all the world must need one day as we,
Speedy oblivion, rest for memory.

XX.

THE PRIDE OF UNBELIEF.

WHEN I complained that I had lost my hope
Of life eternal with eternal God ;
When I refused to read my horoscope
In the unchanging stars, or claim abode
With powers and dominations—but, poor clod,
Clung to the earth and grovelled in my tears,
Because I soon must lie beneath the sod
And close the little number of my years,—
Then I was told that pride had barred the way,
And raised this foul rebellion in my head.
Yet, strange rebellion ! I, but yesterday,
Was God's own son in His own likeness bred.
And thrice strange pride ! who thus am cast away
And go forth lost and disinherited.

XXI

ON THE SHORTNESS OF TIME.

IF I could live without the thought of death,
Forgetful of Time's waste, the soul's decay,
I would not ask for other joy than breath,
With light and sound of birds and the sun's ray.
I could sit on untroubled day by day
Watching the grass grow, and the wild flowers range
From blue to yellow and from red to grey
In natural sequence as the seasons change.
I could afford to wait, but for the hurt
Of this dull tick of time which chides my ear.
But now I dare not sit with loins ungirt
And staff unlifted, for death stands too near.
I must be up and doing—ay, each minute.
The grave gives time for rest when we are in it.

XXII.

THE SUBLIME.

To stand upon a windy pinnacle,
Beneath the infinite blue of the blue noon,
And underfoot a valley terrible
As that dim gulf, where sense and being swoon
When the soul parts ; a giant valley strewn
With giant rocks ; asleep, and vast, and still,
And far away. The torrent, which has hewn
His pathway through the entrails of the hill,
Now crawls along the bottom and anon
Lifts up his voice, a muffled tremulous roar,
Borne on the wind an instant, and then gone
Back to the caverns of the middle air ;
A voice as of a nation overthrown
With beat of drums, when hosts have marched to war.

XXIII.

OSTEND.

On hearing the Bells at Sea.

How sweet the tuneful bells' responsive peal !
As when at opening dawn the fragrant breeze
Touches the trembling sense of pale disease,
So piercing to my heart their force I feel.
And hark ! with lessening cadence now they fall,
And now along the white and level tide
They fling their melancholy music wide ;
Bidding me many a tender thought recall
Of summer days, and those delightful years
When by my native streams, in life's fair prime,
The mournful magic of their mingling chime
First waked my wondering childhood into tears !
But seeming now, when all those days are o'er,
The sounds of joy once heard and heard no more.

XXIV.

OMNIA MUTANTUR.

ART thou less beautiful, or I more dull ?
O Nature, once my passion and delight,
How shall I win thee ? Is thy promise null ?
Or have I forfeited my ancient right ?
By me thy skiey splendours are unwatched,
By me thy changeful year unheeded flies,
Glories of sunrise, or of eve unmatched,—
Changes but new delights to lovers' eyes.
Time was, I thought, that thou to me hadst given
The dearest boon imparted from above,
The greener meadow and the bluer heaven,
With the deep heart of wonder and of love.
But now, the sharer of a common lot,
I only wonder that I wonder not.

XXV.

REQUIESCANT.

No more these passion-worn faces shall men's eyes
Behold in life. Death leaves no trace behind
Of their wild hate and wilder love, grown blind
With desperate longing, more than the foam which lies
Splashed up awhile where the cold spray descries
The waves whereto their cold limbs were resigned ;
Yet ever doth the sea-wind's undefined
Vague wailing shudder with their dying sighs.
For all men's souls 'twixt sorrow and love are cast,
As on the earth each lingers his brief space,
While surely nightfall comes, where each man's face
In death's obliteration sinks at last
As a deserted wind-tossed sea's foam-trace—
Life's chilled boughs emptied by death's autumn-blast.

XXVI.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound,
 I strive and struggle to deliver right
 The music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
 With octaves of a mystic depth and height
 Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
 Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air ;
 But if I did it,—as the thunder roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
 Before that dread apocalypse of soul

XXVII.

"SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE."

(NO. XIV.)

If thou must love me let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile . . . her look . . . her way
Of speaking gently, . . . for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day ;"—
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby !
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayest love on, through love's eternity.

XXVIII.

"SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE."

(NO. XVII.)

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use ?
A hope, to sing by gladly ? or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse ?
A shade, in which to sing—of palm or pine ?
A grave, on which to rest from singing ? Choose.

XXIX.

“SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.”

(NO. XXII.)

WHEN our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXX.

"SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE."

(NO. XLIII.)

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of everyday's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

XXXI.

HELEN'S TOWER.*

Who hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance
How the Greek Beauty from the Scæan Gate
Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

Hearts would leap otherwise, at thy advance,
Lady, to whom this Tower is consecrate!
Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate,
Yet, unlike hers, was bless'd by every glance.

The Tower of Hate is outworn, far and strange :
A transitory shame of long ago,
It dies into the sand from which it sprang ;
But thine, Love's rock-built Tower, shall fear no change :
God's self laid stable earth's foundations so,
When all the morning-stars together sang.

* A Tower erected by the present Earl of Dufferin and Clandeboye, on a rock on his estate at Clandeboye, Ireland, in memory of his mother, Helen, Countess of Gifford.

XXXII.

AN ANSWER

(To the question, Why am I a Liberal?)

“WHY?” Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be,—
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid men—each in his degree
Also God-guided—bear, and gaily too?

But little do or can the best of us :
That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold—emancipated thus—
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labour freely, nor discuss
A brother’s right to freedom. That is “Why.”

XXXIII.

WHEN WE ARE ALL ASLEEP.

WHEN He returns, and finds all sleeping here—
Some old, some young, some fair, and some not fair—
Will He stoop down and whisper in each ear
“Awaken!” or for pity’s sake forbear,—
Saying, “How shall I meet their frozen stare
Of wonder, and their eyes so woebegone?
How shall I comfort them in their despair,
If they cry out ‘*Too late! let us sleep on?*’”

Perchance He will not wake us up, but when
He sees us look so happy in our rest,
Will murmur, “Poor dead women and dead men!
Dire was their doom, and weary was their quest.
Wherefore awake them into life again?
Let them sleep on untroubled—it is best.”

XXXIV.

QUIET WATERS.

O RAINBOW, Rainbow! on the livid height,
Softening its ashen outline into dream,
Dewy yet brilliant, delicately bright
As pink wild-roses' leaves, why dost thou gleam
So beckoningly? whom dost thou invite
Still higher upward on the bitter quest?
What dost thou promise to the weary sight
In that strange region whence thou issuest?
Speak'st thou of pensive runlets by whose side
Our dear ones wander sweet and gentle-eyed,
In the soft dawn of a diviner Day?
Art thou a promise? Come those hues and dyes
From heavenly meads, near which thou dost arise
Iris'd from Quiet Waters, far away?

XXXV.

ON ECHO AND SILENCE.

IN eddying course when leaves began to fly
And Autumn in her lap the store to strew,
As 'mid wild scenes I chanced the Muse to woo,
Through glens untrod and woods that frowned on high,
Two sleeping nymphs with wonder mute I spy!—
And lo, she's gone!—in robe of dark green hue,
'Twas Echo from her sister Silence flew;
For quick the hunter's horn resounded to the sky!

In shade affrighted Silence melts away.
Not so her sister!—hark, for onward still
With far-heard step she takes her lingering way,
Bounding from rock to rock, and hill to hill!
Ah, mark the merry maid in mockful play
With thousand mimic tones the laughing forest fill!

XXXVI.

CHILLON.

ETERNAL Spirit of the chainless mind !
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art ;—
For there thy habitation is the heart,—
The heart which love of thee alone can bind ;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned,
To fetters, and the damp vault's rayless gloom.
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.

Chillon ! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar, for 'twas trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace,
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard ! May none those marks efface !
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

XXXVII.

“WHERE LIES THE LAND?”

—WORDSWORTH.

WHERE lies the land to which thy soul would go?—
Beyond the wearied wold, the songless dell,
The purple grape and golden asphodel,
Beyond the zone where streams baptismal flow.
Where lies the land of which thy soul would know?—
There where the unvexed senses darkling dwell,
Where never haunting, hurrying footfall fell,
Where toil is not, nor builded hope laid low.

Rest! Rest! to thy hushed realm how one by one
Old Earth's tired ages steal away and weep
Forgotten or unknown, long duty done.
Ah God, when death in seeming peace shall steep
Life's loud turmoil and Time his race hath run
Shall heart of man at length find rest and sleep?

XXXVIII.

AFTER SUNSET.

VOCAL yet voiceless, lingering, lambent, white
With the wide wings of evening on the fell,
The tranquil vale, the enchanted citadel,—
Another day swoons to another night.
Speak low : from bare Blencathra's purple height
The sound o' the ghyll falls furled ; and, loath to go,
A continent of cloud its plaited snow
Wears far away athwart a lake of light.

Is it the craft of hell that while we lie
Enshaded, lulled, beneath heaven's breezeless sky,
The garrulous clangours and assoilèd shows
Of London's burrowing mazes haunt us yet?
City, forgive me : mother of joys and woes
Thy shadow is here, and lo, our eyes are wet.

XXXIX.

THE HAUNTED SHORE.

I WALK'D at sunset by the lonely waves,
When Autumn stood about me, gold and brown ;
I watch'd the great red sun, in clouds, go down,
An orient King, that 'mid his bronzed slaves
Dies, leaning on his sceptre, with his crown.
A hollow moaning from innumerable caves,
In green and glassy darkness sunk below,
Told of some grand and ancient deed of woe,
Of murdered kings that sleep in weltering graves.
Still thro' the sunshine wavering to and fro,
With sails all set, the little vessels glide ;
Mild is the Eve and mild the ebbing Tide,
And yet that hollow moaning will not go,
Nor the old Fears that with the Sea abide.

XL.

FIRST SIGHT OF SPRING.

THE hazel-blooms, in threads of crimson hue,
Peep through the swelling buds, foretelling Spring,
Ere yet a white-thorn leaf appears in view,
Or March finds throistles pleased enough to sing.
To the old touchwood-tree woodpeckers cling
A moment, and their harsh-toned notes renew ;
In happier mood, the stockdove claps his wing ;
The squirrel sputters up the powdered oak,
With tail cocked o'er his head, and ears erect,
Startled to hear the woodman's understroke ;
And with the courage which his fears collect,
He hisses fierce, half malice and half glee,
Leaping from branch to branch about the tree,
In winter's foliage, moss and lichens, deckt.

XLI.

THE ASSIGNATION.

THE darkness throbbed that night with the great heat,
And my heart throbbed at thought of what should be ;
The house was dumb, the lock slid silently ;
I only heard the night's hot pulses beat
Around me as I sped with quiet feet
Down the dark corridors ; and once the sea
Moaned in its slumber, and I stayed, but she
Came forth to meet me lily-white and sweet.

Was there a man's soul ever worth her kiss ?
Silent and still I stood, and she drew near,
And her lips mixed with mine, and her sweet breath
Fanned my hot face ; and afterward I wis,
What the sea said to us I did not hear ;
But now I know it spake of Doom and Death.

XLII.

KING OF KINGS.

O DEATH, Death, Death ! Thou art the Lord of all,
And at Thy darkened shrine I bow mine head
In this Thy temple, where for Thee are shed
Man's blood and tears : gods, kings, and temples fall ;
Thy reign, O Lord, is immemorial :
Ever thou waxest stronger and more dread,
More populous grows Thy kingdom of the dead,
And joy and love and hope Thou hast in thrall.

We follow vain desires and idle things,
We vex our souls with hollow hopes and fears,
We dread the future and regret the past :
Thou comest, O Almighty, King of kings,
And stillest all the tumult of the years,
And tak'st each babbler to thy breast at last.

XLIII.

THE BIRTH OF SPEECH.

WHAT was't awakened first the untried ear
Of that sole man who was all human kind?
Was it the gladsome welcome of the wind,
Stirring the leaves that never yet were sere?
The four mellifluous streams which flowed so near,
Their lulling murmurs all in one combined?
The note of bird unnamed? The startled hind
Bursting the brake, in wonder, not in fear,
Of her new lord? Or did the holy ground
Send forth mysterious melody to greet
The gracious pressure of immaculate feet?
Did viewless seraphs rustle all around
Making sweet music out of air as sweet?
Or his own voice awake him with its sound?

XLIV.


PRAYER.

THERE is an awful quiet in the air,
And the sad earth, with moist imploring eye,
Looks wide and wakeful at the pondering sky,
Like Patience slow subsiding to Despair.
But see, the blue smoke as a voiceless prayer,
Sole witness of a secret sacrifice,
Unfolds its tardy wreaths, and multiplies
Its soft chameleon breathings in the rare
Capacious ether,—so it fades away,
And nought is seen beneath the pendent blue,
The undistinguishable waste of day.
So have I dreamed!—oh may the dream be true!—
That praying souls are purged from mortal hue,
And grow as pure as He to whom they pray.

XLV.

NIGHT.

THE crackling embers on the hearth are dead ;
The indoor note of industry is still ;
The latch is fast ; upon the window-sill
The small birds wait not for their daily bread ;
The voiceless flowers—how quietly they shed
Their nightly odours ;—and the household rill
Murmurs continuous dulcet sounds that fill
The vacant expectation, and the dread
Of listening night. And haply now She sleeps ;
For all the garrulous noises of the air
Are hush'd in peace ; the soft dew silent weeps,
Like hopeless lovers for a maid so fair :—
Oh ! that I were the happy dream that creeps
To her soft heart, to find my image there.



XLVI.

NOT IN VAIN.

LET me not deem that I was made in vain,
Or that my being was an accident
Which Fate, in working its sublime intent,
Not wished to be, to hinder would not deign.
Each drop uncouncted in a storm of rain
Hath its own mission, and is duly sent
To its own leaf or blade, not idly spent
'Mid myriad dimples on the shipless main.
The very shadow of an insect's wing,
For which the violet cared not while it stayed
Yet felt the lighter for its vanishing,
Proved that the sun was shining by its shade.
Then can a drop of the eternal spring,
Shadow of living lights, in vain be made?

XLVII.

NOVEMBER.

THE mellow year is hastening to its close ;
The little birds have almost sung their last,
Their small notes twitter in the dreary blast—
That shrill-piped harbinger of early snows ;
The patient beauty of the scentless rose,
Oft with the morn's hoar crystal quaintly glassed,
Hangs, a pale mourner for the summer past,
And makes a little summer where it grows :
In the chill sunbeam of the faint brief day
The dusky waters shudder as they shine,
The russet leaves obstruct the straggling way
Of oozy brooks, which no deep banks define,
And the gaunt woods, in ragged scant array,
Wrap their old limbs with sombre ivy-twine.

XLVIII.

TO NATURE.

It may indeed be phantasy when I
Essay to draw from all created things
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings ;
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
Lessons of love and earnest piety.
So let it be ; and if the wide world rings
In mock of this belief, to me it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.

So will I build my altar in the fields,
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee only God ! and Thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.

XLIX.

PHANTASMION'S QUEST OF IARINE.

Yon changeful cloud will soon thy aspect wear,
So bright it grows:—and now, by light winds shaken,—
O ever seen yet ne'er to be o'ertaken!—
Those waving branches seem thy billowy hair.

The cypress glades recall thy pensive air;
Slow rills that wind like snakes amid the grass,
Thine eye's mild sparkle fling me as they pass,
Yet murmuring cry, *This fruitless Quest forbear!*

Nay e'en amid the cataract's loud storm,
Where foamy torrents from the crags are leaping.
Methinks I catch swift glimpses of thy form,
Thy robe's light folds in airy tumult sweeping;
Then silent are the falls: 'mid colours warm
Gleams the bright maze beneath their splendour sweeping.

L.

CLEOPATRA.

Lo! this is she that ruled the world. Draw near:
Over her lowers the shadow of sudden death,
To-morrow, without heart-beat, pulse, or breath,
Octavian's band shall find her lying here.
There, at her side, among the fig-leaves sere,
Coils the cerastes hid, unseen by us:
Yet is, within those great eyes luminous,
No fear, nor any moment's touch of fear.
Let be. She is but tracing back the path
Trod through the life that is to end this night,
Thinking of all the dead days' dear delight,
Lute-music, wine-cup, dance, and revelry,
The sensuous stillness of the scented bath,
Lip-touch, and clasp, and arms of Antony.

LI.

GUNS OF PEACE.

Sunday Night, March 30th, 1856.

GHOSTS of dead soldiers in the battle slain,
Ghosts of dead heroes dying nobler far
In the long patience of inglorious war,
Of famine, cold, heat, pestilence and pain,—
All ye whose loss makes up our vigorous gain—
This quiet night, as sounds the cannon's tongue,
Do ye look down the trembling stars among,
Viewing our peace and war with like disdain?
Or, wiser grown since reaching those new spheres,
Smile ye on those poor bones ye sow'd as seed
For this our harvest, nor regret the deed?
Yet lift one cry with us to Heavenly ears—
"Strike with Thy bolt the next red flag unfurl'd,
And make all wars to cease throughout the world."

LII.

THE ROCK OF CASHEL.

ROYAL and saintly Cashel! I would gaze
 Upon the wreck of thy departed powers
 Not in the dewy light of matin hours,
Nor the meridian pomp of summer's blaze,
But at the close of dim autumnal days,
 When the sun's parting glance, through slanting showers,
 Sheds o'er thy rock-throned battlements and towers
Such awful gleams as brighten o'er Decay's
Prophetic cheek. At such a time, methinks,
 There breathes from thy lone courts and voiceless aisles
A melancholy moral, such as sinks
 On the lone traveller's heart, amid the piles
Of vast Persepolis on her mountain stand,
Or Thebes half buried in the desert sand.

LIII.

THE RIGHT USE OF PRAYER.

THEREFORE when thou wouldst pray, or dost thine alms,
Blow not a trump before thee ; hypocrites
Do thus, vaingloriously ; the common streets
Boast of their largess, echoing their psalms.
On such the laud of men, like unctuous balms,
Falls with sweet savour. Impious counterfeits !
Prating of heaven, for earth their bosom beats !
Grasping at weeds, they lose immortal palms !
God needs not iteration nor vain cries :
That man communion with his God might share
Below, Christ gave the ordinance of prayer :
Vague ambages, and witless ecstasies,
Avail not : ere a voice to prayer be given
The heart should rise on wings of love to heaven.

LIV.

THE CHILDREN BAND.

(THE CRUSADERS. NO. V.)

ALL holy influences dwell within
The breast of Childhood : instincts fresh from God
Inspire it, ere the heart beneath the rod
Of grief hath bled, or caught the plague of sin.
How mighty was that fervour which could win
Its way to infant souls!—and was the sod
Of Palestine by infant Croises trod?
Like Joseph went they forth, or Benjamin,
In all their touching beauty, to redeem?
And did their soft lips kiss the sepulchre?
Alas! the lovely pageant, as a dream,
Faded! they sank not through ignoble fear;
They felt not Moslem steel. By mountain, stream,
In sands, in fens, they died—no mother near!

LV.

THE SUN-GOD.

I SAW the Master of the Sun. He stood
High in his luminous car, himself more bright ;
An Archer of immeasurable might :
On his left shoulder hung his quivered load ;
Spurned by his steeds the eastern mountains glowed ;
Forward his eager eye, and brow of light
He bent ; and, while both hands that arch embowed,
Shaft after shaft pursued the flying night.

No wings profaned that god-like form : around
His neck high-held an ever-moving crowd
Of locks hung glistening : while such perfect sound
Fell from his bowstring, that th' ethereal dome
Thrilled as a dew-drop ; and each passing cloud
Expanded, whitening like the ocean foam.

LVI.

THE SETTING OF THE MOON NEAR CORINTH.

FROM that dejected brow in silence beaming
A light it seems too feeble to retain,
A sad calm tearful light through vapours gleaming,
Slowly thou sinkest on the Ægean main ;
To me an image, in thy placid seeming,
Of some fair mourner who will not complain ;
Of one whose cheek is pale, whose eyes are streaming,
Whose sighs are heaved unheard,—not heaved in vain.

And yet what power is thine ? as thou dost sink,
Down sliding slow along that azure hollow,
The great collected Deep thy course doth follow,
Amorous the last of those faint smiles to drink ;
And all his lifted fleets in thee obey
The symbol of an unpresuming sway !

LVII.

HER BEAUTY.

A TRANCĒD beauty dwells upon her face,
A lustrous summer-calm of peace and prayer ;
In those still eyes the keenest gaze can trace
No sad disturbance, and no touch of care.
Peace rests upon her lips, and forehead fair,
And temples unadorned. A cloistral grace
Says to the gazer over-bold, "Beware,"
Yet love hath made her breast his dwelling-place.

An awful night abideth with the pure,
And theirs the only wisdom from above.
She seems to listen to some strain obscure
Of music in sidereal regions wove,
Or to await some more transcendent dower
From heaven descending on her like a dove.

LVIII.

SORROW.

COUNT each affliction, whether light or grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee; do thou
With courtesy receive him; rise and bow;
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold, crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave;
Then lay before him all thou hast; allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,
Or mar thy hospitality; no wave
Of mortal tumult to obliterate
The soul's marmoreal calmness: Grief should be
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate;
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free;
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end.

LIX.

NATIONAL APOSTACY.

TRAMPLING a dark hill, a red sun athwart,
I saw a host that rent their clothes and hair,
And dashed their spread hands 'gainst that sunset glare,
And cried, *Go from us, God, since God thou art!*
Utterly from our coasts and towns depart,
Court, camp, and senate-hall, and mountain bare;
Our pomp Thou troublest, and our feast dost scare,
And with Thy temples dost confuse our mart!
Depart Thou from our hearing and our seeing:
Depart Thou from the works and ways of men;
Their laws, their thoughts, the inmost of their being:
Black nightmare, hence! that earth may breathe again!
"Can God depart?" I said. A Voice replied,
Close by—"Not so; each Sin at heart is *Deicide*."

LX.

HUMANITY.

THERE is a soul above the soul of each,
A mightier soul, which yet to each belongs:
THERE is a sound made of all human speech,
And numerous as the concourse of all songs :
And in that soul lives each, in each that soul,
Though all the ages are its lifetime vast ;
Each soul that dies, in its most sacred whole
Receiveth life that shall for ever last.
And thus for ever with a wider span
Humanity o'erarches time and death ;
Man can elect the universal man,
And live in life that ends not with his breath :
And gather glory that increases still
Till Time his glass with Death's last dust shall fill.

LXI.

THE ARMY SURGEON.

OVER that breathing waste of friends and foes,
The wounded and the dying, hour by hour,
In will a thousand, yet but one in power,
He labours through the red and groaning day.
The fearful moorland where the myriads lay
Moves as a moving field of mangled worms :
And as a raw brood, orphaned in the storms,
Thrust up their heads if the wind bend a spray
Above them, but when the bare branch performs
No sweet paternal office, sink away
With helpless chirp of woe,—so, as he goes,
Around his feet in clamorous agony
They rise and fall; and all the seething plain
Bubbles a cauldron vast of many-coloured pain.

LXII.

THE COMMON GRAVE.

LAST night beneath the foreign stars I stood,
And saw the thoughts of those at home go by
To the great grave upon the hill of blood.
Upon the darkness they went visibly,
Each in the vesture of its own distress.
Among them there came One, frail as a sigh,
And like a creature of the wilderness
Dug with her bleeding hands. She neither cried
Nor wept ; nor did she see the many stark
And dead that lay unburied at her side.
All night she toiled ; and at that time of dawn,
When Day and Night do change their More and Less,
And Day is more, I saw the melting Dark
Stir to the last, and knew she laboured on.

LXIII.

HOME: IN WAR-TIME.

SHE turned the fair page with her fairer hand—
More fair and frail than it was wont to be;
O'er each remember'd thing he loved to see
She lingered, and as with a fairy's wand
Enchanted it to order. Oft she fanned
New motes into the sun; and as a bee
Sings through a brake of bells, so murmured she,
And so her patient love did understand
The reliquary room. Upon the sill
She fed his favourite bird. "Ah, Robin, sing!
He loves thee." Then she touches a sweet string
Of soft recall, and towards the Eastern hill
Smiles all her soul—

for him who cannot hear
The raven croaking at his carrion ear.

LXIV.

DON QUIXOTE.

BEHIND thy pasteboard, on thy battered hack,
Thy lean cheek striped with plaster to and fro,
Thy long spear levelled at the unseen foe,
And doubtful Sancho trudging at thy back,
Thou wert a figure strange enough, good lack !
To make wiseacredom, both high and low,
Rub purblind eyes, and (having watched thee go)
Despatch its Dogberrys upon thy track :
Alas ! poor Knight ! Alas ! poor soul possest !
Yet would to-day, when Courtesy grows chill,
And life's fine loyalties are turned to jest,
Some fire of thine might burn within us still !
Ah ! would but one might lay his lance in rest,
And charge in earnest—were it but a mill.

LXV.

THE SEA CAVE.

HARDLY we breathe, although the air be free:
How massively doth awful Nature pile
'The living rock like some cathedral aisle,
Sacred to silence and the solemn sea.
How that clear pool lies sleeping tranquilly,
And under its glassed surface seems to smile,
With many hues, a mimic grove the while
Of foliage submarine—shrub, flower, and tree.
Beautiful scene, and fitted to allure
The printless footsteps of some sea-born maid,
Who here, with her green tresses disarrayed,
'Mid the clear bath, unfearing and secure,
May sport at noontide in the caverned shade,
Cold as the shadow, as the waters pure.

LXVI.

ANGLING.

Go, take thine angle, and with practised line,
Light as the gossamer, the current sweep;
And if thou failest in the calm still deep,
In the rough eddy may the prize be thine.
Say thou'rt unlucky where the sunbeams shine;
Beneath the shadow, where the waters creep,
Perchance the monarch of the brook shall leap—
For fate is ever better than design.
Still persevere; the giddiest breeze that blows,
For thee may blow, with fame and fortune rife;
Be prosperous—and what reck if it arose
Out of some pebble with the stream at strife,
Or that the light wind dallied with the boughs?
Thou art successful;—such is human life.

LXVII.

AN INTERIOR.

THE grass around my limbs is deep and sweet ;
Yonder the house has lost its shadow wholly,
The blinds are dropped, and softly now and slowly
The day flows in and floats ; a calm retreat
Of tempered light where fair things fair things meet ;
White busts and marble Dian make it holy,
Within a niche hangs Durer's Melancholy
Brooding : and, should you enter, there will greet
Your sense with vague allurements effluence faint,
Of one magnolia bloom ; fair fingers draw
From the piano Chopin's heart-complaint ;
Alone, white-robed she sits ; a fierce macaw
On the verandah, proud of plume and paint,
Screams, insolent despot, showing beak and claw.

LXVIII.

EVENING, NEAR THE SEA.

LIGHT ebbs from off the Earth ; the fields are strange,
Dark, trackless, tenantless ; now the mute sky
Resigns itself to Night and Memory,
And no wind will yon sunken clouds derange,
No glory enrapture them ; from cot or grange
The rare voice ceases ; one long-breathed sigh,
And steeped in summer sleep the world must lie ;
All things are acquiescing in the change.
Hush ! while the vaulted hollow of the night
Deepens, what voice is this the sea sends forth,
Disconsolate iterance, a passionless moan ?
Ah ! now the Day is gone, and tyrannous Light
And the calm presence of fruit-bearing Earth :
Cry, Sea ! it is thy hour ; thou art alone.

LXIX.

AWAKENING.

WITH brain o'erworn, with heart a summer clod,
With eye so practised in each form around,—
And all forms mean,—to glance above the ground
Irks it, each day of many days we plod,
Tongue-tied and deaf, along life's common road ;
But suddenly, we know not how, a sound
Of living streams, an odour, a flower crowned
With dew, a lark upspringing from the sod,
And we awake. O joy of deep amaze !
Beneath the everlasting hills we stand,
We hear the voices of the morning seas,
And earnest prophesyings in the land,
While from the open heaven leans forth at gaze
The encompassing great cloud of witnesses.

LXX.

TWO INFINITIES.

A LONELY way, and as I went my eyes
Could not unfasten from the Spring's sweet things,
Lush-sprouted grass, and all that climbs and clings
In loose, deep hedges, where the primrose lies
In her own fairness, buried blooms surprise
The plunderer bee and stop his murmurings,
And the glad flutter of a finch's wings
Outstartle small blue-speckled butterflies.
Blissfully did one speedwell plot beguile
My whole heart long ; I loved each separate flower,
Kneeling. I looked up suddenly—Dear God !
There stretched the shining plain for many a mile,
The mountains rose with what invincible power !
And how the sky was fathomless and broad !

LXXI.

BROTHER DEATH.

WHEN thou would'st have me go with thee, O Death,
Over the utmost verge, to the dim place,
Practise upon me with no amorous grace
Of fawning lips, and words of delicate breath,
And curious music thy lute uttereth;
Nor think for me there must be sought-out ways
Of cloud and terror; have we many days
Sojourned together, and is this thy faith?
Nay, be there plainness 'twixt us; come to me
Even as thou art, O brother of my soul;
Hold thy hand out and I will place mine there;
I trust thy mouth's inscrutable irony,
And dare to lay my forehead where the whole
Shadow lies deep of thy purpureal hair.

LXXII.

REST.

THE boat is hauled upon the hardening sand,
The mist is gathering o'er the dim morass,
The kine are couching on the daisied grass,
And in their stalls the champing horses stand.
No splash of brine along the darkling strand,
No light winds play the reed-pipes as they pass ;
The moonlit deep is glittering like glass,
And all things yield to stilly Night's command.

O balmy hours of silver sheen and dew!
Shall nought belie you save this labouring breast—
The soul alone to Nature be untrue,
And still of what she hath not go in quest?
Just now ye spake. Ah, speak those words anew,
“ *Wait, weary heart; soon thou shalt also rest.*”

LXXIII.

FOUNTAINS ABBEY.

ABBEY! for ever smiling pensively,
How like a thing of Nature dost thou rise
Amid her loveliest works! as if the skies,
Clouded with grief, were arched thy roof to be,
And the tall trees were copied all from thee!
Mourning thy fortunes—while the waters dim
Flow like the memory of thy evening hymn,
Beautiful in their sorrowing sympathy;
As if they with a weeping sister wept,
Winds name thy name! But thou, though sad, art calm,
And Time with thee his plighted troth hath kept;
For harebells deck thy brow, and, at thy feet,
Where sleep the proud, the bee and redbreast meet,
Mixing thy sighs with Nature's lonely psalm.

LXXIV

SILENCE.

HUSH—hush ! it is the charm of nothingness,—

A sweet estate wherein there is no sweet ;

A music true, though no vibrations beat ;

A passive mistress, cold and passionless—

Bestowing not, yet having power to bless,

Until, in holy love, we kiss her feet.

O joy wherein no soul a friend may greet,

O Thou that giv'st no comfort in distress,

Why do we love thee, Silence? Art thou then

The mystic, ghostly Mother of mankind,

From forth whose womb we sprang without a throe?

To Thee resort for rest and peace all men ;

In Thy embrace serene, pure joy they find,—

Art Thou the very Heaven whereto we go ?

LXXV.

A SUNSET THOUGHT.

THE sun is burning with intensest light
Behind yon grove ; and in the golden glow
Of unconsuming Fire, it doth show
Like to the Bush, in which to Moses' sight
The Lord appeared ! and O, am I not right
In thinking that He reappears e'en now
To me, in the old Glory ? and I bow
My head, in wonder hush'd, before His might !

Yea ! this whole world so vast, to Faith's clear eye,
Is but that burning Bush full of His Power,
His Light, and Glory ; not consumed thereby,
But made transparent : till in each least flower,
Yea ! in each smallest leaf, she can descry
His Spirit shining through it visibly !

LXXVI.

LONDON, AFTER MIDNIGHT.

SILENCE broods o'er the mighty Babylon ;
And Darkness, his twin brother, with him keeps
His solemn watch ; the wearied city sleeps,
And Solitude, strange contrast ! muses on
The fate of man, there, whence the crowd anon
Will scare her with life's tumult ! The great deeps
Of human Thought are stirless, yet there creeps,
As 'twere, a far-off hum, scarce heard, then gone,
On the still air ; 'tis the great Heart doth move
And beat at intervals, soon from its sleep
To start refreshed. Oh Thou, who rul'st above,
Be with it in its dreams, and let it keep,
Awake, the spirit of pure peace and love,
Which Thou breath'st through it now, so still and deep !

LXXVII.

SUNSET.

THE golden foot-prints of departing Day
Are fading from the ocean silently,
And Twilight, stealing onward, halves the sky ;
One after one they fade in light away,
While, with a thousand songs, the Earth doth say
Farewell, uplifting all her mountains high,
To catch the last reflections ere they die,
As, one by one, their peaks grow cold and grey.
Yon orb, that hangs upon the ocean's rim,
Looks, Janus-like, both back and forward too,
And, while it fades *here* to Earth's evening-hymn,
It brightens, from afar, o'er regions new,
Unto the songs of Morning, raised to Him,
Who thus 'twixt night and day the great line drew !

LXXVIII.

SOCRATES.

*“Of making many books there is no end; and much study is
an affliction of the flesh.”*

THOU, mighty Heathen, wert not so bereft
Of heavenly helps to thy great-hearted deeds,
That thou should'st dig for truths in broken creeds,
'Mid the loose sands of four old empires left.
Motions and shadows dimly glowing fell
On thy broad soul from forms invisible.
With its plain grandeur, simple, calm, and free,
What wonder was it that thy life should merit
Sparkles of grace, and angel ministry,
With jealous glimpses of the world of spirit?
Greatest and best in this—that thy pure mind,
Upon its saving mission all intent,
Scorned the untruth of leaving books behind,
To claim for thine what through thy lips was sent.

LXXIX.

ON THE RAMPARTS AT ANGOULÊME.

WHY art thou speechless, O thou setting Sun ?
Speak to this earth, speak to this listening scene,
Where Charente flows among the meadows green,
And in his gilded waters, one by one,
The inverted minarets of poplar quake
With expectation, until thou shalt break
The intolerable silence. See ! he sinks
Without a word ; and his ensanguined bier
Is vacant in the west, while far and near
Behold ! each coward shadow eastward shrinks.
Thou dost not strive, O sun, nor dost thou cry
Amid thy cloud-built streets ; but meek and still,
Thou dost the type of Jesus best fulfil,
A noiseless revelation in the sky.

LXXX.

AD MATREM.

OFT in the after days, when thou and I
Have fallen from the scope of human view,
When, both together, under the sweet sky
We sleep beneath the daisies and the dew,
Men will recall thy gracious presence bland,
Conning the pictured sweetness of thy face ;
Will pore o'er paintings by thy plastic hand,
And vaunt thy skill and tell thy deeds of grace.
Oh, may they then, who crown thee with true bays,
Saying, "What love unto her son she bore!"
Make this addition to thy perfect praise,
"Nor ever yet was mother worshipped more!"
So shall I live with thee, and thy dear fame
Shall link my love unto thine honoured name.

LXXXI.

IN PROSPECT OF DEATH.

WHEN I shall die—and be it late or soon—

Let merciful memories be my only shroud.

Think me a light veiled in a morning cloud ;

Living to knowledge,—like a finished moon,

Though nothing here, to other lands a boon :

Nor let my death give triumph to the proud,

By your weak tears: be happy with the crowd,

Who, spite of woe, are seldom out of tune.

Wise in the common instinct, be ye glad :

There's some redemption in the doom of death

That cuts us from new sins—sweet mercy's plan.

Yet, if for me you be sincerely sad,

Do this sweet homage to my valued breath—

Ease the sad burden of some living man !

LXXXII.

AGE.

I WILL not rail, or grieve when torpid eld
Frosts the slow-journeying blood, for I shall see
The lovelier leaves hang yellow on the tree,
The nimbler brooks in icy fetters held.
Methinks the aged eye that first beheld
The fitful ravage of December wild,
Then knew himself indeed dear Nature's child,
Seeing the common doom, that all compelled.
No kindred we to her belov'd broods
If, dying these, we drew a selfish breath ;
But one path travel all her multitudes,
And none disputes the solemn Voice that saith :
"Sun to thy setting ; to your autumn, woods ;
Stream to thy sea ; and man unto thy death !"

LXXXIII.

DANTE.

POET, whose unscarr'd feet have trodden Hell,
By what grim path and dread environing
Of fire couldst thou that dauntless footstep bring
And plant it firm amid the dolorous cell
Of darkness where perpetually dwell
The spirits cursed beyond imagining?
Or else is thine a visionary wing,
And all thy terror but a tale to tell?
Neither and both, thou seeker! I have been
No wilder path than thou thyself dost go,
Close mask'd in an impenetrable screen,
Which having rent I gaze around, and know
What tragic wastes of gloom, before unseen,
Curtain the soul that strives and sins below.

LXXXIV.

INTRA MUROS.

AT last 'tis gone, the fever of the day,—
Thank God, there comes an end to everything ;
Under the night-cloud's deepened shadowing,
The noises of the city drift away
Thro' sultry streets and alleys ; and the grey
Fogs round the great cathedral rise and cling.
I long, and long,—but no desire will bring
Against my face the keen wind salt with spray.

O far away, green waves, your voices call,
Your cool lips kiss the wild and weedy shore ;
And out upon the sea-line, sails are brown,—
White sea-birds, crying, hover,—soft shades fall,
Deep waters dimple round the dripping oar,
And last rays light the little fishing-town.

LXXXV.

ON A LUTE FOUND IN A SARCOPHAGUS.

WHAT curled and scented sun-girls, almondeyed,
With lotus blossoms in their hands and hair,
Have made their swarthy lovers call them fair,
With these spent strings, when brutes were deified,
And Memnon in the sunrise sprang and cried,
And love-winds smote Bubastis, and the bare
Black breasts of carven Pasht received the prayer
Of suppliants bearing gifts from far and wide !
This lute has outsung Egypt ; all the lives
Of violent passion, and the vast calm art
That lasts in granite only, all lie dead ;
This little bird of song alone survives,
As fresh as when its fluting smote the heart
Last time the brown slave wore it garlanded.

LXXXVI.

ALCYONE.

(*A Sonnet in Dialogue.*)

Phæbus. WHAT voice is this that wails above the deep?

Alcyone. A wife's, that mourns her fate and loveless days.

Phæbus. What love lies buried in these waterways?

Alcyone. A husband's, hurried to eternal sleep.

Phæbus. Cease, O beloved, cease to wail and weep!

Alcyone. Wherefore?

Phæbus. The waters in a fiery blaze

Proclaim the godhead of my healing rays.

Alcyone. No god can sow where fate hath stood to reap.

Phæbus. Hold, wringing hands! cease, piteous tears, to fall.

Alcyone. But grief must rain and glut the passionate sea.

Phæbus. Thou shall forget this ocean and thy wrong,

And I will bless the dead, though past recall.

Alcyone. What can'st thou give to me or him in me?

Phæbus. A name in story and a light in song.

LXXXVII.

THE TOMB OF SOPHOCLES.

A BOUNDING satyr, golden in the beard,
That leaps with goat-feet high into the air,
And crushes from the thyme an odour rare,
Keeps watch around the marble tomb revered
Of Sophocles, the poet loved and feared,
Whose mighty voice once called out of her lair
The Dorian muse severe, with braided hair,
Who loved the thyrsus and wild dances weird.
Here all day long the pious bees can pour
Libations of their honey; round this tomb
The Dionysiac ivy loves to roam;
The satyr laughs; but He awakes no more,
Wrapped up in silence at the grave's cold core,
Nor sees the sun wheel round in the white dome.

LXXXVIII.

THE THRUSH'S SONG.

SWEET MAVIS ! at this cool delicious hour
Of gloaming, when a pensive quietness
Hushes the odorous air,—with what a power
Of impulse unsubdued dost thou express
Thyself a spirit ! While the silver dew
Holy as manna on the meadow falls,
Thy song's impassioned clarity, trembling through
This omnipresent stillness, disentrals
The soul to adoration. First I heard
A low thick lubric gurgle, soft as love,
Yet sad as memory, through the silence poured
Like starlight. But the mood intenser grows,
Precipitate rapture quickens, move on move
Lucidly linked together, till the close.

LXXXIX.

TO A FRIEND.

Now, while the long delaying ash assumes
The delicate April green, and, loud and clear,
Through the cool, yellow, mellow twilight glooms,
The thrush's song enchants the captive ear;
Now, while a shower is pleasant in the falling,
Stirring the still perfume that wakes around;
Now that doves mourn, and from the distance calling,
The cuckoo answers with a sovereign sound,—

Come with thy native heart, O true and tried!
But leave all books; for what with converse high,
Flavoured with Attic wit, the time shall glide
On smoothly, as a river floweth by,
Or, as on stately pinion, through the grey
Evening, the culver cuts his liquid way.

XC.

VENUS URANIA.

Is this thy Paphos,—the devoted place
Where rests, in its own eventide, thy shrine?
To thee not lone is solitude divine
Where love-dreams o'er thy waves each other chase
And melt into the passion of thy face!
The twilight waters, dolphin-stained, are thine;
The silvery depths and blue, night-orbed, entwine,
And in bright films thy rosy form embrace,—
Girdling thy loins with heaven-spun drapery
Wove in the looms of thy resplendent sea.
The columns point their shadows to the plain,
And ancient days are dialed o'er again;
The floods remember: falling at thy feet,
Upon the sands of time they ever beat.

XCI

WRITTEN IN EDINBURGH.

EVEN thus, methinks, a city reared should be,
Yea, an imperial city, that might hold
Five times an hundred noble towns in fee,
And either with their might of Babel old,
Or the rich Roman pomp of empery
Might stand compare, highest in arts enrolled,
Highest in arms ; brave tenement for the free,
Who never crouch to thrones, or sin for gold.

Thus should her towers be raised—with vicinage
Of clear bold hills, that curve her very streets,
As if to vindicate 'mid choicest seats
Of art, abiding Nature's majesty ;
And the broad sea beyond, in calm or rage
Chainless alike, and teaching Liberty.

XCII.

SEA-SHELL MURMURS.

THE hollow sea-shell which for years hath stood
On dusty shelves, when held against the ear
Proclaims its stormy parent ; and we hear
The faint far murmur of the breaking flood.
We hear the sea. The sea ? It is the blood
In our own veins, impetuous and near,
And pulses keeping pace with hope and fear
And with our feelings' ever shifting mood.

Lo ! in my heart I hear, as in a shell,
The murmur of a world beyond the grave,
Distinct, distinct, though faint and far it be.
Thou fool ! this echo is a cheat as well,—
The hum of earthly instincts ; and we crave
A world unreal as the shell-heard sea.

XCIII.

IDLE CHARON.

THE shores of Styx are lone for evermore,
And not one shadowy form upon the steep
Looms through the dusk, far as the eye can sweep,
To call the ferry over as of yore ;
But tintless rushes all about the shore
Have hemmed the old boat in, where, locked in sleep,
Hoar-bearded Charon lies ; while pale weeds creep
With tightening grasp all round the unused oar.

For in the world of Life strange rumours run
That now the soul departs not with the breath,
But that the Body and the Soul are one ;
And in the loved one's mouth, now, after death,
The widow puts no obol, nor the son,
To pay the ferry in the world beneath.

XCIV.

LETHE.

I HAD a dream of Lethe, of the brink
Of leaden waters, whither many bore
Dead, pallid loves, while others, old and sore,
Brought but their tottering selves, in haste to drink.
And, having drunk, they plunged, and seemed to sink
Their load of love or guilt for evermore,
Reaching with radiant brow the sunny shore
That lay beyond, no more to think and think.

Oh, who will give me, chained to Thought's dull strand,
A draught of Lethe, salt with final tears,
Were it no more than fills the hollow hand?
Oh, who will rid me of the wasted years,
The thought of Life's fair structure vainly planned,
And each false hope, that mocking re-appears?

XCV.

SUNKEN GOLD.

IN dim green depths rot ingot-laden ships,
While gold doubloons that from the drowned hand fell
Lie nestled in the ocean-flower's bell
With Love's gemmed rings once kissed by now dead lips.
And round some wrought-gold cup the sea-grass whips
And hides lost pearls, near pearls still in their shell,
Where sea-weed forests fill each ocean dell,
And seek dim sunlight with their countless tips.

So lie the wasted gifts, the long-lost hopes,
Beneath the now hushed surface of myself,
In lonelier depths than where the diver gropes.
They lie deep, deep ; but I at times behold
In doubtful glimpses, on some reefy shelf,
The gleam of irrecoverable gold.

XCVI.

TO DEATH.

(ON HEARING OF THE ILLNESS OF E. DE V.)

HAST thou then wrapped us in thy shadow, Death !
Already in the very dawn of joy ?
And in cold triumph dreamest to destroy
The last and dearest hope which lingereth
Within my desolated heart ? to blast
The young unfolding bud ? and dash away,
As in some desert-demon's cruel play,
The cup my parch'd lips had begun to taste ?
O Impotent ! O very Phantom ! know,
Bounds are there to thy ravage even here ;
Sanctuaries inaccessible to fear
Are in the heart of man while yet below :
Love, not of sense, can wake such communings
As are among the Soul's eternal things.

XCVII.

SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND OF LOVE.

O BROODING Spirit of Wisdom and of Love,
Whose mighty wings even now o'ershadow me :
Absorb me in thine own immensity,
And raise me far my finite self above !
Purge vanity away and the weak care
That name or fame of me should widely spread ;
And the deep wish keep burning in their stead
Thy blissful influence afar to bear,
Or see it borne ! Let no desire of ease,
No lack of courage, faith, or love, delay
My own steps in that high thought-paven way,
In which my soul her clear commission sees :
Yet with an equal joy let me behold
Thy chariot o'er that way by others roll'd.

XCVIII.

ENGLAND.

ARISE up, England, from the smoky cloud
That covers thee, the din of whirling wheels :
Not the pale spinner, prematurely bowed
By his hot toil, alone the influence feels
Of all this deep necessity for gain :
Gain still ; but deem not only by the strain
Of engines on the sea and on the shore,
Glory, that was thy birthright, to retain.

O thou that knewest not a conqueror,
Unchecked desires have multiplied in thee,
Till with their bat-wings they shut out the sun :
So in the dusk thou goest moodily,
With a bent head, as one who gropes for ore,
Heedless of living streams that round him run.

XCIX.

TO THE FOUNTAIN AT FRASCATI.

Nor by Aldobrandini's watery show,
Still plashing at his portal never dumb
Minished of my devotion, shalt thou come,
Leaving thy natural fount on Algido,
Wild wingèd daughter of the Sabine snow ;
Now creeping under quiet Tusculum ;
Now gushing from those caverns old and numb ;—
Dull were his heart who gazed upon thee so.
Emblem thou art of Time, memorial stream,
Which in ten thousand fancies, being here,
We waste, or use, or fashion, as we deem ;
But if its backward voice comes ever near,
As thine upon the hill, how doth it seem
Solemn and stern, sepulchral and severe !

C.

"PATER VESTER PASCIT ILLA."

OUR bark is on the waters ! wide around
The wandering wave ; above, the lonely sky :
Hush ! a young sea-bird floats, and that quick cry
Shrieks to the levelled weapon's echoing sound :
Grasp its lank wing, and on, with reckless bound !
Yet, creature of the surf, a sheltering breast
To-night shall haunt in vain thy far-off nest,
A call unanswered search the rocky ground.

Lord of Leviathan ! when Ocean heard
Thy gathering voice, and sought his native breeze ;
When whales first plunged with life, and the proud deep
Felt unborn tempests heave in troubled sleep,
Thou didst provide, even for this nameless bird,
Home and a natural love amid the surging seas.

CI.

TRUTH AND BEAUTY.

Two souls there are in nature and in life—
The soul of Beauty and the soul of Truth ;
Towards which we yearn and strain with restless strife,
Along paths fraught with malice or with ruth ;—
In the red face of ridicule and scorn,
Men sought, and still must seek these—for within,
(In spite of all earth's sorrow and her sin),
The soul is to the search and manner born.

And still, in looking Beauty in the face,
With strong prophetic joy we recognise
Something of what we may be, as we trace
Our own dim shadow in her lustrous eyes ;
Nor may we part such with a dull harsh rule—
Beauty is *true* and Truth is *beautiful* !

CII.

NIGHT.

NIGHT comes, and stars their wonted vigils keep
In soft unfathomable depths of sky :
In mystic veil of shadowy darkness lie
The infinite expanses of the deep,—
Save where the silvery paths of moonlight sleep,
And rise and sink for ever dreamily
With the majestic heaving of the sea.
Night comes, and tenfold gloom where dark and steep
Into black waters of a land-locked bay
The cliffs descend : there never tempest raves
To break the awful slumber : far below
Glimmer the foamy fringes white as snow ;
And sounds of strangled thunder rise away,
And midnight moanings of imprisoned waves.

CIII.

SILENCE.

THERE is a silence where hath been no sound ;
There is a silence where no sound may be ;
In the cold grave—under the deep, deep sea,
Or in wide desert where no life is found,
Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound
No voice is hushed—no life treads silently,
But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,
That never spoke, over the idle ground.
But in green ruins, in the desolate walls
Of antique palaces, where Man hath been ;
Though the dun fox, or wild hyæna, calls,
And owls, that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,
There the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

CIV.

DEATH.

IT is not death, that sometime in a sigh
This eloquent breath shall take its speechless flight ;
That sometime these bright stars, that now reply
In sunlight to the sun, shall set in night,
That this warm conscious flesh shall perish quite,
And all life's ruddy springs forget to flow ;
That thoughts shall cease, and the immortal sprite
Be lapped in alien clay and laid below ;
It is not death to know this,—but to know
That pious thoughts, which visit at new graves
In tender pilgrimage, will cease to go
So duly and so oft,—and when grass waves
Over the past-away, there may be then
No resurrection in the minds of men.

CV.

THE TIMES TO COME.

THE moon that borrows now a gentle light
Once burned another sun ; then from on high
The earth received a double day ; the sky
Showed but faint stars, and never knew a night.
The poles, now frigid and for ever white
With the deep snows that on their bosoms lie,
Were torrid as the moon that hung thereby
And mingled rays as fiercely hot as bright.
Mutations infinite ! Through shifting sea
And lands huge monstrous beasts once took their range
Where now our stately world shows pleasantly !
Then be not fearful at the thought of change,
For though unknown the times that are to be,
Yet shall they prove most beautifully strange.

CVI.

HAPPINESS.

A SPLENDOUR amid glooms,—a sunny thread
Woven into a tapestry of cloud,
A merry child a-playing with the shroud
That lies upon a breathless mother's bed,—
A garland on the front of one new wed,
Trembling and weeping while her troth is vowed,—
A schoolboy's laugh that rises light and loud
In licensed freedom from ungentle dread ;
These are examples of the Happiness
For which our nature fits us ; More and Less
Are parts of all things to the mortal given,
Of Love, Joy, Truth, and Beauty. Perfect Light
Would dazzle, not illuminate our sight,—
From Earth it is enough to glimpse at Heaven.

CVII.

THE NILE.

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands,—
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roamed through the young world, the glory extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.

Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us ; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.

CVIII.

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE CRICKET.

GREEN little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass;
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts; and both were sent on earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song:
In-doors and out, summer and winter,—Mirth.

CIX.

ONE DEAD.

Is it deep sleep, or is it rather death?
Rest anyhow it is, and sweet is rest:—
No more the doubtful blessing of the breath;
Our God hath said that silence is the best,
And thou art silent as the pale round moon,
And near thee is our birth's great mystery:—
Alas, we knew not thou would'st go so soon!
We cannot tell where sky is lost in sea,
But only find life's bark to come and go,
By wondrous Nature's hidden force impelled,—
Then melts the wake in sea, and none shall know
For certain which the course the vessel held;—
The lessening ship by us no more is seen,
And sea and sky are just as they have been.

CX.

AN ANCIENT CHESS KING.

HAPLY some Rajah first in ages gone
Amid his languid ladies finger'd thee,
While a black nightingale, sun-swart as he,
Sang his one wife, love's passionate orison :
Haply thou mayst have pleased old Prester John
Among his pastures, when full royally
He sat in tent—grave shepherds at his knee—
While lamps of balsam winked and glimmered on.

What dost thou here? Thy masters are all dead.
My heart is full of ruth and yearning pain
At sight of thee, O king that hast a crown
Outlasting theirs, and tells of greatness fled
Through cloud-hung nights of unabated rain
And murmur of the dark majestic town.

CXI.

HIGH SUMMER.

I NEVER wholly feel that summer is high,
However green the trees or loud the birds,
However movelessly eye-winking herds
Stand in field-ponds, or under large trees lie,
Till I do climb all cultured pastures by,
That, edged by hedgerows studiously trim,
Smile like a lady's face with lace laced prim,
And on some moor or hill that seeks the sky
Lonely and nakedly,—utterly lie down,
And feel the sunshine throbbing on body and limb,
My drowsy brain in pleasant drunkenness swim,
Each rising thought sink back and dreamily drown,
Smiles creep o'er my face, and smother my lips, and cloy,
Each muscle sink to itself, and separately enjoy.

CXII.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne :
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

CXIII.

TO AILSA ROCK.

HEARKEN, thou craggy ocean pyramid !
Give answer from thy voice, the sea-fowl's screams !
When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams ;
When, from the sun, was thy broad forehead hid ?
How long is't since the mighty power bid
Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams !
Sleep in the lap of thunder or sun-beams,
Or when grey clouds are thy cold cover-lid ?
Thou answer'st not, for thou art dead asleep !
Thy life is but two dead eternities—
The last in air, the former in the deep ;
First with the whales, last with the eagle-skies—
Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee steep,
Another cannot wake thy giant size.

CXIV.

ON THE ELGIN MARBLES.

My spirit is too weak ; mortality
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
 And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
 Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep,
 That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceivèd glories of the brain
 Bring round the heart an indescribable feud ;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
 That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main,
 A sun, a shadow of a magnitude.

CXV.

TO HOMER.

STANDING aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So thou wast blind !—but then the veil was rent,
For Jove uncurtained Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spermy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive :
Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green ;
There is a budding morrow in mid-night ;
There is a triple sight in blindness keen ;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

CXVI.

THE DAY IS GONE.

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone !

Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,

Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous waist !
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,

Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,

Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—
Vanished unseasonably at shut of eve,

When the dusk holiday—or holinight
Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave

The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight ;
But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

CXVII.

BRIGHT STAR!

BRIGHT STAR! would I were steadfast as thou art—

Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—

No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
Half-passionless, and so swoon on to death.

CXVIII.

ART thou already weary of the way
Thou who hast yet but half the way gone o'er ?
Get up, and lift thy burthen ; lo, before
Thy feet the road goes stretching far away.
If thou already faint who art but come
Through half thy pilgrimage, with fellows gay,
Love, youth, and hope, under the rosy bloom
And temperate airs of early breaking day—
Look yonder, how the heavens stoop and gloom !
There cease the trees to shade, the flowers to spring,
And the angels leave thee. What wilt thou become
Through yon drear stretch of dismal wandering,
Lonely and dark ?—*I shall take courage, friend,
For comes not every step more near the end.*

CXIX.

LOVE'S MARTYRDOM.

SWEET—we will hold to Love for Love's sweet sake,
Seeing Love to us must be his own reward :
Haply we shall not find our task too hard,
Nor suffer from intolerable ache.
Yea, though henceforth our lives asunder break,
From every comfort-giving hope debarr'd,
Love may support his martyrs, and the scarr'd
And wounded heart may triumph at the stake.

Sweet—not for us Love's guerdons : not for us
The boons which wont Love's constancy requite ;
No whisper of low voices tremulous,
Kiss, or caress ; no breath of Love's delight :
Yet will we hold our joyless troth and thus
Achieve Love's victory in Fate's despite.

CXX.

HOMERIC UNITY.

THE sacred keep of Ilion is rent
With shaft and pit ; vague waters wander slow
Through plains where Simois and Scamander went
To war with gods and heroes long ago :
Not yet to dark Cassandra, lying low
In rich Mycenæ, do the Fates relent ;
The bones of Agamemnon are a show,
And ruined is his royal monument.

The awful dust and treasures of the Dead
Has Learning scattered wide ; but vainly thee,
Homer, she measures with her Lesbian lead,
And strives to rend thy songs : too blind is she
To know the crown on thine immortal head
Of indivisible supremacy.

CXXI.

COLONEL BURNABY.

THOU that on every field of earth and sky
Didst hunt for Death—that seemed to flee and fear—
How great and greatly fallen dost thou lie
Slain in the Desert by some wandering spear!
“Not here,” alas ! may England say—“not here
Nor in this quarrel was it meet to die,
But in that dreadful battle drawing nigh,
To shake the Afghan passes strait and sheer.”

Like Aias by the Ships shouldst thou have stood,
And in some glen have stayed the stream of flight,
The pillar of thy people and their shield,
Till Helmund or till Indus ran with blood,
And back, towards the Northlands and the Night,
The stricken Eagles scattered from the field.

CXXII.

SOMETHING LOST.

How changed is Nature from the Time antique !
The world we see to-day is dumb and cold :
It has no word for us. Not thus of old
It won heart-worship from the enamoured Greek.
Through all fair forms he heard the Beauty speak ;
To him glad tidings of the Unknown were told
By babbling runlets, or sublimely rolled
In thunder from the cloud-enveloped peak.
He caught a message at the oak's great girth,
While prisoned Hamadryads weirdly sang :
He stood where Delphi's Voice had chasm-birth,
And o'er strange vapour watched the Sibyl hang ;
Or where, 'mid throbbings of the tremulous earth,
The caldrons of Dodona pulsed and rang.

CXXIII.

ON THE BEACH IN NOVEMBER.

My heart's Ideal, that somewhere out of sight
Art beautiful and gracious and alone,—
Haply, where blue Saronic waves are blown
On shores that keep some touch of old delight,—
How welcome is thy memory, and how bright,
To one who watches over leagues of stone
These chilly northern waters creep and moan
From weary morning unto weary night.
O Shade-form, lovelier than the living crowd,
So kind to votaries, yet thyself un vowed,
So free to human fancies, fancy-free,
My vagrant thought goes out to thee, to thee,
As wandering lonelier than the Poet's cloud,
I listen to the wash of this dull sea.

CXXIV.

A THOUGHT FROM PINDAR.

(Nem. V.)

TWIN immortalities man's art doth give
To man : both fair ; both noble ; one supreme.
The sculptor beating out his portrait scheme
Can make the marble statue breathe and live ;
Yet with a life cold, silent, locative ;
It cannot break its stone-eternal dream,
Or step to join the busy human stream,
But dwells in some high fane a hieroglyph.

Not so the poet. Hero, if thy name
Lives in his verse, it lives indeed. For then
In every ship thou sailest passenger
To every town where aught of soul doth stir,
Through street and market borne, at camp and game,
And on the lips and in the hearts of men !

CXXV.

SUBURBAN MEADOWS.

How calmly drops the dew on tree and plant,
While round each pendulous leaf the cool airs blow !
The neighbour city has no sign to show
Of all its grim machines that toil and pant,
Except a sky that coal makes confidant :
But there the human rivers ebb and flow,
And thither was I wonted once to go
With heart not ill at ease or recusant.
Here now I love to wander morn and eve,
Till oaks and elms have grown oracular ;
Yet conscious that my soberest thoughts receive
A tinge of tumult from the smoke afar ;
And scarcely know to which I most belong—
These simple fields or that unsimple throng.

CXXVI.

LOVE, DEATH, AND TIME.

Ah me, dread friends of mine,—Love, Time, and Death :

Sweet Love, who came to me on sheeny wing,
And gave her to my arms—her lips, her breath,

And all her golden ringlets clustering :
And Time, who gathers in the flying years,

He gave me all, but where is all he gave ?
He took my love and left me barren tears,

Weary and lone I follow to the grave.
There Death will end this vision half-divine.

Wan Death, who waits in shadow evermore,
And silent, ere he give the sudden sign ;

Oh, gently lead me thro' thy narrow door,
Thou gentle Death, thou trustiest friend of mine—
Ah me, for Love—will Death my love restore ?

CXXVII.

EVENING.

ALREADY evening! In the duskiest nook
Of yon dusk corner, under the Death's-head,
Between the alembics, thrust this legended,
And iron-bound, and melancholy book,
For I will read no longer. The loud brook
Shelves his sharp light up shallow banks thin-spread;
The slumbrous west grows slowly red, and red:
Up from the ripen'd corn her silver hook
The moon is lifting: and deliciously
Along the warm blue hills the day declines:
The first star brightens while she waits for me,
And round her swelling heart the zone grows tight:
Musing, half-sad, in her soft hair she twines
The white rose, whispering "He will come to-night!"

CXXVIII.

NOT THOU, BUT I.

IT must have been for one of us, my own,
To drink this cup and eat this bitter bread.
Had not my tears upon thy face been shed,
Thy tears had dropped on mine ; if I alone
Did not walk now, thy spirit would have known
My loneliness, and did my feet not tread
This weary path and steep, thy feet had bled
For mine, and thy mouth had for mine made moan :
And so it comforts me, yea, not in vain,
To think of thy eternity of sleep,
To know thine eyes are tearless though mine weep :
And when this cup's last bitterness I drain,
One thought shall still its primal sweetness keep—
Thou hadst the peace and I the undying pain.

CXXIX.

YOUTH AND NATURE.

Is this the sky, and this the very earth
I had such pleasure in when I was young?
And can this be the identical sea-song,
Heard once within the storm-cloud's awful girth,
When a great cloud from silence burst to birth,
And winds to whom it seemed I did belong
— Made the keen blood in me run swift and strong
With irresistible, tempestuous mirth?

Are these the forests loved of old so well,
Where on May nights enchanted music was?
Are these the fields of soft, delicious grass,
These the old hills with secret things to tell?
O my dead youth, was this inevitable,
That with thy passing, Nature, too, should pass!

CXXX.

A DREAM.

HERE—where last night she came, even she, for whom
I would so gladly live or lie down dead,
Came in the likeness of a dream and said
Some words that thrilled this desolate ghost-thronged
room—

I sit alone now in the absolute gloom.

Ah! surely on her breast was leaned my head,

Ah! surely on my mouth her kiss was shed,

While all my life broke into scent and bloom.

Give thanks, heart, for thy rootless flower of bliss,

Nor think the gods severe though thus they seem,

Though thou hast much to bear and much to miss,

Whilst thou thy nights and days to be canst deem

One thing, and that thing veritably this—

The imperishable memory of a dream.

CXXXI.

THREE SONNETS ON SORROW.

I.

A CHILD, with mystic eyes and flowing hair,
I saw her first, 'mid flowers that shared her grace ;
Though but a boy, I cried, " How fair a face !"
And, coming nearer, told her she was fair.
She faintly smiled, yet did not say " Forbear !"
But seemed to take a pleasure in my praise.
She led my steps through many a leafy place
And pointed where shy birds and sweet flowers were.

At length we stood upon a brooklet's brink—
I seem to hear its sources babbling yet—
She gave me water from her hand to drink,
The while her eyes upon its flow were set.
" Thy name ? " I asked ; she whispered low, " Regret,"
Then faded as the sun began to sink.

CXXXII.

THREE SONNETS ON SORROW.

II.

WE met again, as I foresaw we should ;
Youth flooded all my veins, and she had grown
To woman's height, yet seemed a rose half blown.
Like sunset clouds that o'er a landscape brood
Her eyes were, that they might not be withstood,
And like the wind's voice when it takes the tone
Of pine trees was her voice. I cried "My own !"
And kneeling there I worshipped her and wooed.

O bitter marriage, though inevitable,
Ordained by fate, who wrecks or saves our days !
Lo, the changed bride, no longer fair of face,
And in her eyes the very fires of hell !
"Thy name?" I cried ; and these words hissing fell—
"Anguish—and madness comes of my embrace."

CXXXIII.

THREE SONNETS ON SORROW.

III.

WHAT thing may be to come I cannot know.
Her eyes have less of hell in them, meanwhile ;
At times she almost smiles a ghastly smile,
I have in all things done her bidding so.
Chill are the rooms wherein no bright fires glow,
Where no fair picture does the eye beguile ;
Once awful laughter shook the gloomy pile,
Unholy, riotous shapes went to and fro.

There is no sound, now, in the house at all,
Only outside the wind moans on, alway.
My Lady Sorrow has no word to say,
Seems half content ; for well she knows her thrall
Shall not escape from her ; that should God call
She would rise with him at the Judgment Day.

CXXXIV.

MINE.

IN that tranced hush when sound sank awed to rest,
Ere from her spirit's rose-red, rose-sweet gate
Came forth to me her royal word of fate,
Did she sigh "Yes," and droop upon my breast ;
While round our rapture, dumb, fixed, unexpressed
By the seized senses, there did fluctuate
The plaintive surges of our mortal state,
Tempering the poignant ecstasy too blest.

Do I wake into a dream, or have we twain,
Lured by soft wiles to some unconscious crime,
Dared joys forbid to man? Oh, Light supreme,
Upon our brows transfiguring glory rain,
Nor let the sword of thy just angel gleam
On two who entered heaven before their time !

CXXXV.

IMMORTALITY.

AN INFERENCE.

IF I had lived ere seer or priest unveiled
A life to come, methinks that, knowing thee,
I should have guessed thine immortality ;
For Nature, giving instincts, never failed
To give the ends they point to. Never quailed
The swallow, through air-wilds, o'er tracts of sea,
To chase the summer ; seeds that prisoned be
Dream of and find the daylight. Unassailed
By doubt, impelled by yearnings for the main,
The creature river-born doth there emerge ;
So thou, with thoughts and longings which our earth
Can never compass in its narrow verge,
Shalt the fit region of thy spirit gain,
And death fulfil the promptings of thy birth.

CXXXVI.

LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT.

ON a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Africa careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

CXXXVII.

RENOUNCEMENT.

I MUST not think of thee ; and, tired yet strong,
I shun the love that lurks in all delight—
The love of thee—and in the blue Heaven's height,
And in the dearest passage of a song.
Oh, just beyond the sweetest thoughts that throng
This breast, the thought of thee waits hidden yet bright ;
But it must never, never come in sight ;
I must stop short of thee the whole day long.

But when sleep comes to close each difficult day,
When night gives pause to the long watch I keep,
And all my bonds I needs must loose apart,
Must doff my will as raiment laid away,—
With the first dream that comes with the first sleep
I run, I run, I am gathered to thy heart.

CXXXVIII.

WITHOUT HIM.

“Senza te son nulla.”—PETRARCA.

I TOUCHED the heart that loved me, as a player
Touches a lyre; content with my poor skill
No touch save mine knew my belov'd (and still
I thought at times : Is there no sweet lost air
Old loves could wake in him, I cannot share?) ;
Oh, he alone, alone could so fulfil
My thoughts in sound to the measure of my will.
He is dead, and silence takes me unaware.

The songs I knew not he resumes, set free
From my constraining love, alas for me!
His part in our tune goes with him ; my part
Is locked in me for ever ; I stand as mute
As one with full strung music in his heart
Whose fingers stray upon a shattered lute.

CXXXIX.

SPRING AMONG THE ALBAN HILLS.

TO ———.

“Silent with expectation.”—SHELLEY.

O’ER the Campagna it is dim warm weather,
The Spring comes with a full heart silently
And many thoughts ; a faint flash of the sea
Divides two mists ; straight falls the falling feather.

With wild Spring meanings hill and plain together
Grow pale, or just flush with a dust of flowers.
Rome in the ages, dimmed with all her towers,
Floats in the midst, a little cloud at tether.

I fain would put my hands about thy face,
Thou with thy thoughts, who art another Spring,
And draw thee to me like a mournful child.

Thou lookest on me from another place ;
I touch not this day’s secret, nor the thing
That in thy silence makes thy sweet eyes wild.

CXL.

LIFE AND DEATH.

FROM morn to eve they struggled—Life and Death.

At first it seemed to me that they in mirth

Contended, and as foes of equal worth,

So firm their feet, so undisturbed their breath.

But when the sharp red sun cut through its sheath

Of western clouds, I saw the brown arms' girth

Tighten and bear that radiant form to earth,

And suddenly both fell upon the heath.

And then the wonder came—for when I fled

To where those great antagonists down fell

I could not find the body that I sought,

And when and where it went I could not tell,

One only form was left of those who fought,

The long dark form of Death—and it was dead.

CXLI.

THE BANQUET.

Now, as when sometime with high festival
A conquering king new realms inaugurates,
The souls of men go up within the gates
Of their new-made mysterious palace-hall.
And on their ears in bursts of triumph fall
Marches of mighty music, while below,
In carven cups with far-sought gems aglow,
And lamped by shapes of splendour on the wall,
The new wine of man's kingdom flashes free.
Yet some, among the wonders wondering there,
Sit desolate, and shivering inwardly
Lack yet some love to make the strange thing fair ;
Yea, to their sad souls rather seem to be
Sheep from the sheepfold strayed they know not where.

CXLII.

THE NIGHT'S MESSAGE.

LAST night there came a message to mine ear,
Saying : Come forth, that I may speak with thee.
It was the Night herself that called to me.
And I arose and went forth without fear
And without hope ; and by the mountain-mere,
In the great silence sitting silently,
Drank in amazed the large moon's purity :
Yet was my soul unsoothed of any cheer.

But when the moon had set, a great mist lay
On the earth and me, and to its wide soft breast
Drew forth the secret woe we might not say.
Then slowly, its brooding presence lightlier pressed,
It heaved, and broke, and swayed, and soared away :
And the Earth had morn, and I some space of rest.

CXLIII.

MILTON.

HE left the upland lawns and serene air
Wherefrom his soul her noble nurture drew,
And reared his helm among the unquiet crew,
Battling beneath ; the morning radiance rare
Of his young brow amid the tumult there
Grew grim with sulphurous dust and sanguine dew ;
Yet through all soilure they who marked him knew
The signs of his life's dayspring, calm and fair.
But when peace came, peace fouler far than war,
And mirth more dissonant than battle's tone,
He, with a scornful sigh of his clear soul,
Back to his mountain clomb, now bleak and froze,
And with the awful Night he dwelt alone,
In darkness, listening to the thunder's roll.

CXLIV.

IMMORTALITY.

So when the old delight is born anew
And God re-animates the early bliss,
Seems it not all as one first trembling kiss
Ere soul knew soul with whom she has to do?
“O nights how desolate, O days how few,
O death in life, if life be this, be this!
O weighed alone as one shall win or miss
The faint eternity which shines therethrough!”

Lo, all but age is as a speck of sand
Lost on the long beach where the tides are free,
And no man metes it in his hollow hand
Nor cares to ponder it, how small it be;
At ebb it lies forgotten on the land,
And at full tide forgotten in the sea.

CXLV.

WOULD GOD IT WERE MORNING.

My God, how many times ere I be dead
Must I the bitterness of dying know?
How often like a corpse upon my bed
Compose me and surrender me, and so
Thro' hateful hours and ill-remembered
Between the twilight and the twilight go,
By visions bodiless obscurely led
Thro' many a wild enormity of woe?
And yet I know not but that this is worst
When with that light, the feeble and the first,
I start and gaze into the world again,
And gazing find it as of old accurst,
And grey, and blinded with the stormy burst
And blank appalling solitude of rain.

CXLVI.

HIGH TIDE AT MIDNIGHT.

No breath is on the glimmering ocean-floor,
No blast beneath the windless Pleiades,
But thro' dead night a melancholy roar,
A voice of moving and of marching seas,—
The boom of thundering waters on the shore
Sworn with slow force by desolate degrees
Once to go on, and overwhelm for evermore
Earth and her folk and all their phantasies.
Then half asleep in the great sound I seem
Lost in the starlight, dying in a dream
Where overmastering Powers abolish me,—
Drown, and thro' dim euthanasy redeem
My merged life in the living ocean-stream
And soul-environing of shadowy sea.

CXLVII.

PESSIMISM.

NOT Spring—too lavish of her bud and leaf—

But Autumn, with sad eyes and brow austere,

When fields are bare, and woods are brown and sere,
And leaden skies weep their exhaustless grief.

Spring is so much too bright, since Spring is brief.

And in our hearts is Autumn all the year,

Least sad when the wide pastures are most drear,
And fields grieve most robbed of the last gold sheaf.

For when the plough goes down the brown wet field

A delicate doubtful throb of hope is ours—

What if this coming Spring at last should yield

Joy, with her too profuse unasked-for flowers?

Not all our Springs of commonplace and pain

Have taught us now that Autumn hope is vain.

CXLVIII.

SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW.

THEY do but grope in learning's pedant round
Who on the phantasies of sense bestow
An idol substance, bidding us bow low
Before those shades of being which are found,
Stirring or still, on man's brief trial-ground ;
As if such shapes and modes, which come and go,
Had aught of Truth or Life in their poor show,
To sway or judge, and skill to sain or wound.

Son of immortal seed, high-destined man !
Know thy dread gift,—a creature, yet a cause :
Each mind is its own centre, and it draws
Home to itself, and moulds in its thought's span,
All outward things, the vassals of its will,
Aided by Heaven, by earth unthwarted still.

CXLIX.

LONDON.

DIM miles of smoke behind—I look before,
Through looming curtains of November rain,
Till eyes and ears are weary with the strain :
Amid the glare and gloom, I hear the roar
Of life's sea, beating on a barren shore.

Terrible arbiter of joy and pain !

A thousand hopes are wrecks of thy disdain ;
A thousand hearts have learnt to love no more.
Over thy gleaming bridges, on the street

That ebbs and flows beneath the silent dome,
Life's pulse is throbbing at a fever heat.

City of cities—battlefield and home
Of England's greatest, greatly wear their spoils,
Thou front and emblem of an Empire's toils.

CL.

CROWNED.

TO —.

I THOUGHT to track a world-disdaining Light,
A dreadless Spirit, till our work was done.—
Grown greater in men's eyes, his battle won,
My hero fails me, wearied of the fight,
And, late succeeding, finds Success is Right.
Honoured and wise, his days unruffled run
With grace and mellow music, tamed to shun
The obdurate heart that wrestles with the night.
I was his homager, and shall remain,
Through chance of time and change, his debtor still:
But the old days can never come again
Of love in exile knit, whose memories will
Shine on the way, though shrinking throngs disown,
That lies for me across the seas alone.

CLI.

A CHARACTER—AND A QUESTION.

A DUBIOUS, strange, uncomprehended life,—
A roll of riddles with no answer found,—
A sea-like soul which plummet cannot sound,
Torn by belligerent winds at mutual strife.
The god in him hath taken unto wife
A daughter of the pit, and—strongly bound
By coils of snake-like hair about him wound—
Dies straining hard to raise the severing knife.

For such a sunken soul what room in Heaven?
For such a soaring soul what place in Hell?
Can these desires be damned, these doings shriven,
Or in some lone mid-region must he dwell
For ever? Lo! God sitteth with the seven
Stars in His hand, and shall not He judge well?

CLII.

ONLY A WOMAN'S HAIR.

"*Only a woman's hair.*"—SWIFT.

"*A special despatch in the 'Tagblatt,' states that Wagner's body was laid in the coffin by the widow herself, who, last night, cut off the beautiful hair her husband so admired and placed it in a red cushion under the head of the departed.*"—"Standard," Feb. 17th, 1883

"ONLY a woman's hair!" We may not guess
If'twere a mocking sneer or the sharp cry
Of a great heart's o'ermastering agony
That spake in these four words. Nevertheless
One thing we know,—that the long clinging tress
Had lived with Stella's life in days gone by,
And, she being dead, lived on to testify
Of love's victorious everlastingness.

Such love, O mute musician, doth provide
For thy dear head's repose a pillow rare :
With red of heart's blood is the covering dyed,
And underneath—canst thou not feel it there?—
The rippling wavy wealth that was thy pride,
Now love's last gift—only a woman's hair !

CLIII.

THE RAINBOW.

THE raindrops shimmered down the beamy sky :

“ *Behold,*” one sang, “ *how gloriously bright*

The golden garments of the King of light!”—

“ *Golden! O drop, a beam is in thine eye!*”

A second cries: “ *His robe’s of crimson dye.*”—

“ *Ye both are blind,*” another shouts : “ *my sight*

Is clear, and with the purple veil of night

Our monarch is arrayed in mystery.”

Thus wrangling, shouting, hopeless to agree,

The drops shot swiftly down the headlong steep,

Until at last they fell into the sea.

When they arose from out the cold, dark deep,

The sun sat throned in stainless majesty,

While down a cloud they saw the rainbow sweep.

CLIV.

BY THE SEA.

AH! wherefore do I haunt the shadowy tomb,
My joyless days and nights among the dead?
Know you not He, my radiant Sun, who fled
With hope uncertain, soothes yon awful gloom
Afar, upon the weltering sea's wan lead?
Behold! faint, tremulous, ghostly gleams illumine
The unrevealing mystery of Doom,
Ash-pale dumb wastes, impenetrably dead,
O'erwhelming purple incumbent o'er the coast.
Into the Presence-Chamber of dim Death
He hath been summoned! and I hold my post
Here on the threshold, thirsty for one breath
Released from yonder! leave me! I love my night,
More than abounding pulses of your light!

CLV.

IN MEMORY OF F. C. C.

6th May, 1882.

FAIR Soul, who in this faltering age did show
Manhood's true image, constant, courteous, pure,
In silence strong to do and to endure,
'Neath self-suppression veiling inner glow,—

Justice at one with gentleness:—The throe
Of lightning-death found thee, if any, fit,—
Secure in Faith,—to bare thy breast to it :
Ah! Thine the joy, beloved,—ours the woe?

For thou hast ta'en thine innocence on high,
The child-simplicity of thy stainless years ;
And on thy brows we see the diadem
Of those who walk with Christ in purity,
Fair souls, and wept, like thee, with lifelong tears
Sword-slain in Ephratan Bethlehem.

CLVI.

"TIMOR MORTIS CONTURBAT ME."

COULD I have sung one Song that should survive
The singer's voice, and in my country's heart
Find loving echo—evermore a part
Of all her sweetest memories ; could I give
One great Thought to the People, that should prove
The spring of noble action in their hour
Of darkness, or control their headlong power
With the firm reins of Justice and of Love ;
Could I have traced one Form that should express
The sacred mystery that underlies
All Beauty, and through man's enraptured eyes
Teach him how beautiful is Holiness,—
I had not feared thee. But to yield my breath,
Life's Purpose unfulfilled !—This is thy sting, O Death !

CLVII.

SIBYL.

THIS is the glamour of the world antique ;
The thyme-scents of Hymettus fill the air,
And in the grass narcissus-cups are fair.
The full brook wanders through the ferns to seek
The amber haunts of bees ; and on the peak
Of the soft hill, against the gold-marged sky,
She stands, a dream from out the days gone by.
Entreat her not. Indeed she will not speak !
Her eyes are full of dreams ; and in her ears
There is the rustle of immortal wings ;
And ever and anon the slow breeze bears
The mystic murmur of the song she sings.
Entreat her not : she sees thee not, nor hears
Aught but the sights and sounds of bygone springs.

CLVIII.

HESPERIA.

My dream is of a city in the west,
Built with fair colour, still and sad as flow'rs
That wear the blazon of the autumn hours,
Set by the side of some wide wave's unrest;
And there the sun-fill'd calm is unimprest
Save by a flutter as of silver showers,
Rain-rippled on dim Paradisal bowers,
And some far tune of bells chimed softliest.
About the still clear streets my love-thoughts go;
A many-coloured throng—some pale as pearl,
Some gold as the gold brow-locks of a girl:
And 'midst them where the saddest memories teem,
My veiled hope wanders, musingly and slow,
And hears the sad sea murmur like a dream.

CLIX.

LIFE UNLIVED.

How many months, how many a weary year
My soul hath stood upon that brink of days,
Straining dim eyes into the treacherous haze
For signs of life's beginning. Far and near
The grey mist floated, like a shadow-mere,
Beyond hope's bounds ; and in the lapsing ways
Pale phantoms flitted, seeming to my gaze
The portents of the coming hope and fear.

"Surely," I said, "life shall rise up at last,
Shall sweep me by with pageant and delight!"
But as I spake, the waste shook with a blast
Of cries and clamours of a mighty fight ;
Then all was still. Upon me fell the night,
And a voice whisper'd to me, "*Life is Past.*"

CLX.

EVOLUTION.

HUNGER that strivest in the restless arms
Of the sea-flower, that drivest rooted things
To break their moorings, that unfoldest wings
In creatures to be rapt above thy harms ;
Hunger, of whom the hungry-seeming waves
Were the first ministers, till, free to range,
Thou mad'st the Universe thy park and grange,
What is it thine insatiate heart still craves?
Sacred disquietude, divine unrest!
Maker of all that breathes the breath of life,
No unthrift greed spurs thine unflagging zest,
No lust self-slaying hounds thee to the strife ;
Thou art the Unknown God on whom we wait :
Thy path the course of our unfolded fate.

CLXI.

TO NATURE.

II.

DREAD force, in whom of old we loved to see
A nursing mother, clothing with her life
The seeds of Love divine, with what sore strife
We hold or yield our thoughts of Love and thee!
Thou art not "calm," but restless as the ocean,
Filling with aimless toil the endless years—
Stumbling on thought and throwing off the spheres,
Churning the Universe with mindless motion.
Dull fount of joy, unhallowed source of tears,
Cold motor of our fervid faith and song,
Dead, but engendering life, love, pangs, and fears,
Thou crownedst thy wild work with foulest wrong
When first thou lightedst on a seeming goal
And darkly blundered on man's suffering soul.

CLXII.

TO NATURE.

III.

BLIND Cyclops, hurling stones of destiny,
And not in fury!—working bootless ill,
In mere vacuity of mind and will—
Man's soul revolts against thy work and thee!
Slaves of a despot, conscienceless and *niz*,
Slaves by mad chance befooled to think them free,
We still might rise and with one heart agree
To mar the ruthless grinding of thy mill!
Dread Tyrant, tho' our cries and groans pass by thee,
Man, cutting off from each new "tree of life"
Himself, its fatal flower, could still defy thee,
In waging on thy work eternal strife,—
The races come and coming evermore,
Heaping with hecatombs thy dead-sea shore.

CLXIII.

TO A MOTH THAT DRINKETH OF THE RIPE
OCTOBER.

I.

A MOTH belated,—sun and zephyr-kist,—
Trembling about a pale arbutus bell,
Probing to wildering depths its honeyed cell,—
A noonday thief, a downy sensualist!
Not vainly, sprite, thou drawest careless breath,
Strikest ambrosia from the cool-cupped flowers,
And flutterest through the soft, uncounted hours,
To drop at last in unawaited death;—
'Tis something to be glad! and those fine thrills
Which move thee, to my lip have drawn the smile
Wherewith we look on joy. Drink! drown thine ills,
If ill have any part in thee; erewhile
May the pent force—thy bounded life—set free
Fill larger sphere with equal ecstasy!

CLXIV.

A STILL PLACE.

UNDER what beechen shade or silent oak
Lies the mute, sylvan, now mysterious Pan?
Once (when rich Péneus and Ilissus ran
Clear from their fountains) as the morning broke,
'Tis said the Satyr with Apollo spoke,
And to harmonious strife with his wild reed,
Challenged the God, whose music was indeed
Divine, and fit for heaven. Each played, and woke
Beautiful sounds to life—deep melodies;
One blew his pastoral pipe with such nice care,
That flocks and birds all answered him; and one
Shook his immortal showers upon the air.
That music has ascended to the sun:
But where the other? Speak, ye dells and trees.

CLXV.

THE SEA—IN CALM.

Look what immortal floods the sunset pours
Upon us !—Mark how still (as though in dreams
Bound) the once wild and terrible Ocean seems !
How silent are the winds! No billow roars,
But all is tranquil as Elysian shores ;
The silver margin which aye runneth round
The moon-enchanted sea hath here no sound :
Even Echo speaks not on these radiant moors.
What! is the giant of the ocean dead,
Whose strength was all unmatched beneath the sun?
No : he reposes. Now his toils are done,
More quiet than the babbling brooks is he.
So mightiest powers by deepest calms are fed,
And sleep, how oft, in things that gentlest be.

CLXVI.

MORE THAN TRUTH.

No longer do I know if thou art fair
Or if the truth my vision might disgrace,
Nor do I know if other men would care
To make their sweetest heaven of thy face,
But what to me the words that others speak,
Their thoughts, their laughter, or their foolish gaze?
For hast thou not a herald on my cheek
To tell the coming nearer of thy ways,
And in my veins a stranger blood that flows,
A bell that strikes on pulses of my heart,
Submissive life that proudly comes and goes
Through eyes that burn, and speechless lips that part?
And hast thou not a hidden life in mine,
In thee a soul which none may know for thine?

CLXVII.

THE BODY FAIR.

THE empty marvel of a splendid cage
With fretted gold and twisted silver wire
Thy body seems, and mine a lover's rage
That gilds thy painted shows with rich desire.
And round the precious metal of the bars
Flowers scarlet-hearted, and pale passion flowers,
And crowded jasmine mingle as the stars,
Dewy with scent of kisses, warm with showers.
Of marble, lily and pure snow, the floor ;
The window stained with sunlit ruby shine ;
Of azure water clear the sapphire door
That never turns on hinges crys:alline :
The bird within is mute and does not sing,
And dull his tuneless throat, and clipt his wing.

CLXVIII.

THE STUDENT'S CHAMBER.

STRANGE things pass nightly in this little room,
All dreary as it looks by light of day ;
Enchantment reigns here when at evening play
Red firelit glimpses through the pallid gloom :
Then come—perchance the shadows thrown assume
That guise—heroic guests in dim array,—
The Kings of eld, returned the human way
By Bridge of Dread, from star to straitening tomb.

High dreams they bring that never were dreamt in sleep :
These walls yawn wide to Time, to Death, and Hell,
To the last abyss of men's wild cries to Heaven ;
While night uncurtains on a sobbing deep,
And lo ! the land wherein the Holy Grail,
In far Monsalvat, to the soul is given.

CLXIX.

THE POTATO HARVEST.

A HIGH bare field, brown from the plough, and borne
Aslant from sunset ; amber wastes of sky
Washing the ridge ; a clamour of crows that fly
In from the wide flats where the spent tides mourn
To yon their rocking roosts in pines wind-torn ;
A line of grey snake-fence, that zigzags by
A pond, and cattle ; from the homestead nigh
The long deep summonings of the supper horn.

Black on the ridge, against the lonely flush,
A cart, and stoop-necked oxen ; ranged beside,
Some barrels ; and the day-worn harvest folk,
Here emptying their baskets, jar the hush
With hollow thunders : down the dusk hillside
Lumbers the wain ; and day fades out like smoke.

CLXX.

THE LOST IDEAL OF THE WORLD.

A NOVICE in the School of Paradise,
I leant beside the Golden Gate one day :
Eternity's blue deeps before me lay
That girdle the Queen Island of the skies,
And soul-content was lit within mine eyes,
Calm with the calm that lists not of decay,—
A dreamy sense of dreams come true for aye,
And Darkness burnt up in a last Sunrise.

O God, what was She, there, without the Gate—
Sad in such beauty Heav'n seemed incomplete?
Drawn by a nameless star's young whisperings,
With hands stretch'd forth as if to pass by Fate
She drifted on—so near Thy mercy-seat—
Blind, and in all the loneliness of wings !

CLXXI.

TWO LOVERS.

I.

I LOVE my lover ; on the heights above me
He mocks my poor attainment with a frown.
I, looking up as he is looking down,
By his displeasure guess he still doth love me ;
For his ambitious love would ever prove me
More excellent than I as yet am shown,
So, straining for some good ungrasped, unknown,
I vainly would become his image of me.

And, reaching through the dreadful gulfs that sever
Our souls, I strive with darkness nights and days,
Till my perfected work towards him I raise,
Who laughs thereat, and scorns me more than ever ;
Yet his upbraiding is beyond all praise.
This lover that I love I call : *Endeavour*.

CLXXII.

TWO LOVERS.

II.

I HAVE another lover loving me,
Himself beloved of all men, fair and true.
He would not have me change altho' I grew
Perfect as Light, because more tenderly
He loves myself than loves what I might be.
Low at my feet he sings the winter through,
And, never won, I love to hear him woo.
For in my heaven both sun and moon is he,
To my bare life a fruitful-flooding Nile,
His voice like April airs that in our isle
Wake sap in trees that slept since autumn went.
His words are all caresses, and his smile
The relic of some Eden Ravishment;
And he that loves me so I call : *Content.*

CLXXIII.

LOVER'S SILENCE.

WHEN she whose love is even my air of life
Enters, delay being past, to bless my home,
And ousts her phantom from its place, being come
Herself to fill it ; when the importunate strife
Of absence with desire is stilled, and rife
With heaven is earth ; why am I stricken dumb,
Abashed, confounded, awed of heart and numb,
Waking no triumph of song, no welcoming fife ?

Be thine own answer, soul, who long ago
Did'st see the awful light of Beauty shine,
Silent ; and silently rememberest yet
That glory which no spirit may forget,
Nor utter save in love a thought too fine
For souls to ignore, or mortal sense to know.

CLXXIV.

THE POETIC LAND.

THE bubble of the silver-springing waves,
Castalian music, and that flattering sound,
Low rustling of the loved Apollian leaves,
With which my youthful hair was to be crowned,
Grow dimmer in my ears ; while Beauty grieves
Over her votary, less frequent found ;
And, not untouched by storms, my life-boat heaves
Through the splashed ocean-waters, outward bound.
And as the leaning mariner, his hand
Clasped on his oar, strives trembling to reclaim
Some loved lost echo from the fleeting strand,
So lean I back to the poetic land ;
And in my heart a sound, a voice, a name
Hangs, as above the lamp hangs the expiring flame.

CLXXV.

DAYBREAK IN FEBRUARY.

OVER the ground white snow, and in the air
Silence. The stars like lamps soon to expire,
Gleam tremblingly ; serene and heavenly fair,
The eastern hanging crescent climbeth higher.
See, purple on the azure softly steals,
And Morning, faintly touched with quivering fire,
Leans on the frosty summits of the hills,
Like a young girl over her hoary sire.
Oh, such a dawning over me has come,
The daybreak of thy purity and love ;—
The sadness of the never satiate tomb
Thy countenance hath power to remove,
And from the sepulchre of Hope thy palm
Can roll the stone, and raise her bright and calm.

CLXXVI.

"LIKE A MUSICIAN."

LIKE a musician that with flying finger
Startles the voice of some new instrument,
And, though he know that in one string are blent
All its extremes of sound, yet still doth linger
Among the lighter threads, fearing to start
The deep soul of that one melodious wire,
Lest it, unanswering, dash his high desire,
And spoil the hopes of his expectant heart ;—
Thus with my mistress oft conversing, I
Stir every lighter theme with careless voice,
Gathering sweet music and celestial joys
From the harmonious soul o'er which I fly ;
Yet o'er the one deep master-chord I hover,
And dare not stoop, fearing to tell—I love her.

CLXXVII.

TO THE HARVEST MOON.

AGAIN thou reignest in thy golden hall,
Rejoicing in thy sway, fair queen of night !
The ruddy reapers hail thee with delight :
Theirs is the harvest, theirs the joyous call
For tasks well ended ere the season's fall.
Sweet orb, thou smilest from thy starry height ;
But whilst on them thy beams are shedding bright,
To me thou com'st o'ershadowed with a pall ;
To me alone the year hath fruitless flown ;
Earth hath fulfilled her trust through all her lands,
The good man gathereth where he had sown,
And the Great Master in his vineyard stands ;
But I, as if my task were all unknown,
Come to his gates alas ! with empty hands.

CLXXVIII.

REMEMBER.

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land ;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more, day by day,
You tell me of our future that you planned :
Only remember me ; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve ;
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

CLXXIX.

ONE CERTAINTY.

VANITY of vanities, the Preacher saith,
All things are vanity. The eye and ear
Cannot be filled with what they see and hear.
Like early dew, or like the sudden breath
Of wind, or like the grass that withereth,
Is man, tossed to and fro by hope and fear :
So little joy hath he, so little cheer,
Till all things end in the long dust of death.
To-day is still the same as yesterday,
To-morrow also even as one of them :
And there is nothing new under the sun :
Until the ancient sea of Time be run,
The old thorns shall grow out of the old stem,
And morning shall be cold, and twilight grey.

CLXXX.

THE WORLD.

By day she wooes me, soft, exceeding fair :
But all night as the moon so changeth she ;
Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy,
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.
By day she wooes me to the outer air,
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety :
But through the night, a beast she grins at me,
A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie : by night she stands,
In all the naked horror of the truth,
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
Is this a friend indeed ; that I should sell
My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell.

CLXXXI.

VANITY OF VANITIES.

AH, woe is me for pleasure that is vain,
Ah, woe is me for glory that is past :
Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,
Glory that at the last bringeth no gain !
So saith the sinking heart ; and so again
It shall say till the mighty angel-blast
Is blown, making the sun and moon aghast,
And showering down the stars like sudden rain.
And evermore men shall go fearfully,
Bending beneath their weight of heaviness ;
And ancient men shall lie down wearily,
And strong men shall rise up in weariness ;
Yea, even the young shall answer sighingly,
Saying one to another : How vain it is !

CLXXXII.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING.

LOVE that is dead and buried, yesterday
 Out of his grave rose up before my face,
 No recognition in his look, no trace
Of memory in his eyes dust-dimmed and grey.
While I, remembering, found no word to say,
 But felt my quickened heart leap in its place ;
 Caught afterglow thrown back from long set days,
Caught echoes of all music passed away.
Was this indeed to meet?—I mind me yet
 In youth we met when hope and love were quick,
 We parted with hope dead, but love alive :
 I mind me how we parted then heart sick,
 Remembering, loving, hopeless, weak to strive :—
Was this to meet? Not so, we have not met.

CLXXXIII.

SIBYLLA PALMIFERA.

UNDER the arch of Life, where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned ; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand shake still—long known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

CLXXXIV.

FOR

A VENETIAN PASTORAL.

BY GIORGIONE.

(In the Louvre.)

WATER, for anguish of the solstice :—nay,
But dip the vessel slowly,—nay, but lean
And hark how at its verge the wave sighs in
Reluctant. Hush ! beyond all depth away
The heat lies silent at the break of day :
Now the hand trails upon the viol-string
That sobs, and the brown faces cease to sing,
Sad with the whole of pleasure. Whither stray
Her eyes now, from whose mouth the slim pipes creep
And leave it pouting, while the shadowed grass
Is cool against her naked side ? Let be :
Say nothing now unto her lest she weep,
Nor name this ever. Be it as it was,—
Life touching lips with Immortality.

CLXXXV.

ON REFUSAL OF AID BETWEEN NATIONS.

Not that the earth is changing, O my God !

Nor that the seasons totter in their walk,—

Not that the virulent ill of act and talk

Seethes ever as a wine-press ever trod,—

Not therefore are we certain that the rod

Weights in thine hand to smite thy world ; though now

—Beneath thine hand so many nations bow,

So many kings :—not therefore, O my God !

But because Man is parcelled out in men

To-day ; because, for any wrongful blow,

No man not stricken asks, “ I would be told

Why thou dost strike ; ” but his heart whispers then,

“ *He is he, I am I.* ” By this we know

That the earth falls asunder, being old.

CLXXXVI.

LOVESIGHT.

(House of Life.—IV.)

WHEN do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours, (we two alone,)
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

CLXXXVII.

THE DARK GLASS.

(House of Life.—xxxiv.)

Not I myself know all my love for thee :
How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh
To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday ?
Shall birth and death, and all dark names that be
As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray ;
And shall my sense pierce love ?—the last relay
And ultimate outpost of eternity ?

Lo ! what am I to Love, the Lord of all ?
One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand,—
One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call
And veriest touch of powers primordial,
That any hour-girt life may understand.

CLXXXVIII.

WITHOUT HER.

(House of Life.—LIII.)

WHAT of her glass without her? The blank grey
There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.
Her dress without her? The tossed empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.
Her paths without her? Day's appointed sway
Usurped by desolate night. Her pillowed place
Without her? Tears, ah me! for love's good grace,
And cold forgetfulness of night or day.

What of the heart without her? Nay, poor heart,
Of thee what word remains ere speech be still!
A way-farer by barren ways and chill,
Steep ways and weary, without her thou art,
Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart,
Sheds doubled darkness up the labouring hill.

CLXXXIX.

TRUE WOMAN—HER HEAVEN.

(House of Life.—LVII.)

IF to grow old in Heaven is to grow young,
 (As the Seer saw and said,) then blest were he
 With youth for evermore, whose heaven should be
True Woman, she whom these weak notes have sung
Here and hereafter,—choir-strains of her tongue,—
 Sky-spaces of her eyes,—sweet signs that flee
 About her soul's immediate sanctuary,—
Were Paradise all uttermost worlds among.

The sunrise blooms and withers on the hill
 Like any hillflower; and the noblest troth
 Dies here to dust. Yet shall Heaven's promise clothe
Even yet those lovers who have cherished still
This test for love :—in every kiss sealed fast
 To feel the first kiss and forebode the last.

CXC.

TRUE WOMAN—HER LOVE.

(House of Life.—LVIII.)

SHE loves him ; for her infinite soul is Love,
And he her lode-star. Passion in her is
A glass facing his fire, where the bright bliss
Is mirrored, and the heat returned. Yet move
That glass, a stranger's amorous flame to prove,
And it shall turn, by instant contraries,
Ice to the moon ; while her pure fire to his
For whom it burns, clings close i' the heart's alcove.

Lo ! they are one. With wifely breast to breast
And circling arms, she welcomes all command
Of love,—her soul to answering ardours fann'd :
Yet as morn springs or twilight sinks to rest,
Ah ! who shall say she deems not loveliest
The hour of sisterly sweet hand-in-hand ?

CXCI.

THE CHOICE.

(House of Life.—LXXII.)

THINK thou and act ; to-morrow thou shalt die.

Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,

Thou say'st : " Man's measured path is all gone o'er :

Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,

Man clomb until he touched the truth ; and I,

Even I, am he whom it was destined for."

How should this be ! Art thou then so much more

Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby ?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound

Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me ;

Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.

Miles and miles distant though the last line be,

And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—

Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

CXCII.

LOST DAYS.

(*House of Life.*—LXXXVI.)

THE lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here ; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
“I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?”
“And I—and I—thyself,” (lo! each one saith,)
“And thou thyself to all eternity!”

CXCIII.

“RETRO ME, SATHANA!”

(*House of Life.*—xc.)

GET thee behind me. Even as, heavy-curl'd,
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
So shall Time be ; and as the void car, hurled
Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world :
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
It shall be sought and not found anywhere.
Get thee behind me, Satan. Oft unfurled,
Thy perilous wings can beat and break like lath
Much mightiness of men to win thee praise.
Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways.
Thou still, upon the broad vine-sheltered path,
Mayst wait the turning of the phials of wrath
For certain years, for certain months and days.

CXCIV.

A SUPERScription.

(*House of Life*.—xcvii.)

Look in my face ; my name is Might-have-been ;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell ;
Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between ;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.

Mark me, how still I am ! But should there dart
One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
Of that wing'd Peace which lulls the breath of sighs,—
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

CXCv.

DEMOCRACY DOWNTRODDEN.

How long, O Lord?—The voice is sounding still:	a
Not only heard beneath the altar-stone.	h
Not heard of John Evangelist alone	h
In Patmos. It doth cry aloud and will	a
Between the earth's end and earth's end, until	a
The day of the great reckoning—bone for bone,	h
And blood for righteous blood, and groan for groan;	h
Then shall it cease on the air with a sudden thrill;	a
Not slowly growing fainter if the rod	c
Strikes here or there amid the evil throng	d
Or one oppressor's hand is stayed and numbs;	e
Not till the vengeance that is coming comes.	e
For shall all hear the voice excepting God,	e
Or God not listen, hearing?—Lord, how long?	d

CXCVI.

EMIGRATION.

WEAVE o'er the world your weft, yea weave yourselves,
Imperial races weave the warp thereof.
Swift like your shuttle speed the ships, and scoff
At wind and wave. And, as a miner delves
For hidden treasure bedded deep in stone,
So seek ye and find the treasure patriotism
In lands remote and dipped with alien chrism,
And make those new lands heart-dear and your own.
Weave o'er the world yourselves. Half-human man
Wanes from before your faces like a cloud
Sun-stricken, and his soil becomes his shroud.
But of your souls and bodies ye shall make
The sov'reign vesture of its leagueless span,
Clothing with history cliff and wild and lake.

CXCVII.

AT LEMNOS.

ON this lone isle whose rugged rocks affright
The cautious pilot, ten revolving years
Great Pæan's son, unwonted erst to tears,
Wept o'er his wound ; alike each rolling light
Of heaven he watched, and blamed its lingering flight ;
By day the sea-mew screaming round his cave
Drove slumber from his eyes ; the chiding wave
And savage howlings chased his dreams by night.
Hope still was his : in each low breeze that sighed
Through his low grot he heard a coming oar—
In each white cloud a coming sail he spied ;
Nor seldom listened to the fancied roar
Of Oeta's torrents, or the hoarser tide
That parts famed Trachis from the Euboic shore.

CXCVIII.

THE UNIVERSE VOID.

REVOLVING worlds, revolving systems, yea,
Revolving firmaments, nor there we end :
Systems of firmaments revolving, send
Our thought across the Infinite astray,
Gasping and lost and terrified, the day
Of life, the goodly interests of home,
Shrivelled to nothing ; that unbounded dome
Peeling still on, in blind fatality.

No rest is there for our soul's wingèd feet,
She must return for shelter to her ark—
The body, fair, frail, death-born, incomplete,
And let her bring this truth back from the dark :
Life is self-centred, man is nature's god ;
Space, time, are but the walls of his abode.

CXCIX.

BELOW THE OLD HOUSE.

BENEATH those buttressed walls with lichen grey,
Beneath the slopes of trees whose flickering shade
Darkens the pools by dun green velveted,
The stream leaps like a living thing at play,—
In haste it seems : it cannot cannot stay !
The great boughs changing there from year to year,
And the high jackdaw-haunted eaves, still hear
The burden of the rivulet—*Passing away !*

And some time certainly that oak no more
Will keep the winds in check ; his breadth of beam
Will go to rib some ship for some far shore ;
Those coigns and eaves will crumble, while that stream
Will still run whispering, whispering night and day,
That oversong of Father Time—*Passing away !*

CC.

PARTED LOVE.

METHINKS I have passed through some dreadful door,
Shutting off summer and its sunniest glades
From a dark waste of marsh and ruinous shades :
And in that sunlit past, one day before
All other days is crimson to the core ;
That day of days when hand in hand became
Encircling arms, and with an effluent flame
Of terrible surprise, we knew love's lore.

The rose-red ear that then my hand caressed,
Those smiles bewildered, that low voice so sweet,
The truant threads of silk about the brow
Dishevelled, when our burning lips were pressed
Together, and the temple-pulses beat !
All gone now—where am I, and where art thou?

CCI.

SEEKING FORGETFULNESS.

AND yet I am as one who looks behind,
A traveller in a shadowed land astray,
Passing and lost upon the boundary
Of actual things, who turns against the wind,
An hundred simulacral ghosts to find
Close following, an hundred pairs of eyes
Shining around like phosphorescent flies,—
And all of them himself, yet changed in kind.

Those once I was, which of them now am I?
Not one, all alien, long abandoned masks,
That in some witches' sabbath long since past,
Did dance awhile in my life's panoply,
And drank with me from out of the same flasks;
Am I not rid of these, not even at last?

CCII.

EXPERIENCE.

STEADILY burning like a lamp enshrined,
The Sanscrit says our lives should pass away ;
Even so, but how to guard by night and day
This priceless lamp? From the Unknown God's wind
Fans it for ever, joys and cares combined,
The plague of fire and hail, in through the bars
Of this our prison-house make constant jars ;
No heart of flesh can hold their powers confined.

Not then for us in Western lands is it,
Where every hour brings loads enough for years,
Naked on contemplation's mat to sit ;
But woe to him who finds no time at all
For questioning, who sleeps in a festive hall ;
Who finds no gains in long-remembered tears.

CCIII.

A GARLAND FOR ADVANCING YEARS.

WEAR thou this fresh green garland this one day,
This white-flowered garland wear for Love's delight,
While still the sun shines, ere the lessening light
Declines into the shadows cold and grey:
Wear thou this myrtle leaf while yet ye may,
Love's wings are wings that hate the dews of night,
Nor will he rest still smiling in our sight,
And still companioning our western way.

Wear then this plain green garland this one day,
To please Love's eyes, else not for all the might
Of all the gods, nor any law of right,
Will he, content with age's disarray,
For us pass by the youthful and the gay;
And it were hard to live in love's despite.

CCIV.

OZYMANDIAS.

I MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed :
And on the pedestal these words appear :
" My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair !"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

CCV.

A CHILL IN SUMMER.

I WENT upon a meadow bright with gold
Of buttercups, which glistened on the green
Of summer grass, veiled with a filmy sheen
Of gossamer, whereby a river rolled
His shrunken waters by a city old,
Leaving large space of poisonous ooze between
The herbage and his waves, which were not clean,
And in the air there was a touch of cold.
Then my thoughts troubled me, I knew not why;
But everything seemed still, and nought at rest.
The sun grew dim, the faint wind seemed to sigh,
The pale blue seemed to shiver as unblest,
White fleecy clouds came scudding up the sky,
And turned to ashen darkness in the west.

CCVI.

BEAUTY.

BEAUTY still walketh on the earth and air ;
Our present sunsets are as rich in gold
As ere the Iliad's music was out-rolled,
The roses of the Spring are ever fair,
'Mong branches green still ring-doves coo and pair,
And the deep sea still foams its music old ;
So if we are at all divinely souled,
This beauty will unloose our bonds of care.
'Tis pleasant when blue skies are o'er us bending
Within old starry-gated Poesy,
To meet a soul set to no worldly tune,
Like thine, sweet friend ! Ah, dearer this to me
Than are the dewy trees, the sun, the moon,
Or noble music with a golden ending.

CCVII.

WINTER.

A WRINKLED crabbèd man they picture thee,
Old Winter, with a ragged beard as grey
As the long moss upon the apple-tree ;
Blue-lipt, an ice drop at thy sharp blue nose,
Close muffled up, and on thy dreary way
Plodding alone through sleet and drifting snows.
They should have drawn thee by the high-heapt hearth,
Old Winter ! seated in thy great armed chair,
Watching the children at their Christmas mirth ;
Or circled by them as thy lips declare
Some merry jest, or tale of murder dire,
Or troubled spirit that disturbs the night ;
Pausing at times to rouse the smouldering fire,
Or taste the old October brown and bright.

CCVIII.

THE TOUCH OF LIFE.

I SAW a'circle in a garden sit
Of dainty dames and solemn cavaliers,
Whereof some shuddered at the burrowing nit,
And at the carrion worm some burst in tears :
And all, as envying the abhorred estate
Of empty shades and disembodied elves,
Under the laughing stars, early and late,
Sat shamefast at their birth and at themselves.

The keeper of the house of life is fear ;
In the rent lion is the honey found
By him that rent it ; out of stony ground
The toiler, in the morning of the year,
Beholds the harvest of his grief abound
And the green corn put forth the tender ear.

CCIX.

EVENING.

My window's open to the evening sky ;
The solemn trees are fringed with golden light ;
The lawn here shadow'd lies, there kindles bright ;
And cherished roses lift their incense high.
The punctual thrush, on plane-tree warbling nigh,
With loud and luscious cries calls down the night ;
Dim waters, flowing on with gentle might,
Between each pause are heard to murmur by.
The book that told of wars in holy-land,
(Nor less than Tasso sounded in mine ears)
Escapes unheeded from my listless hand.
Poets whom Nature for her service rears,
Like Priests in her great temple ministering stand,
But in her glory fade when she appears.

CCX.

TO TIME.

TIME, I rejoice, amid the ruin wide
That peoples thy dark empire, to behold
Shores against which thy waves in vain have rolled,
Where man's proud works still frown above thy tide.
The deep-based Pyramids still turn aside
Thy wasteful current; vigorously old,
Lucania's temples their array unfold,
Pillar and portico, in simple pride.
Nor less thy joy, when, sheltered from thy storms
In earth's fond breast, hid treasure bursts the sod—
Elaborate stone in sculpture's matchless forms.
Oft did I mock thee, spoiler, as I trod
The glowing courts where still the Goddess warms,
And stern in beauty stands the quivered God.

CCXI.

TO THEODORE WATTS.

(Dedicatory Sonnet. *Tristram of Lyonesse*:
And other Poems.)

SPRING speaks again, and all our woods are stirred,
And all our wide glad wastes a-flower around,
That twice have heard keen April's clarion sound
Since here we first together saw and heard
Spring's light reverberate and reiterate word
Shine forth and speak in season. Life stands crowned
Here with the best one thing it ever found,
As of my soul's best birthdays dawns the third.

There is a friend that as the wise man saith
Cleaves closer than a brother: nor to me
Hath time not shown, through days like waves at strife,
This truth more sure than all things else but death,
This pearl most perfect found in all the sea
That washes towards your feet these waifs of life.

CCXII.

JOHN FORD.

HEW hard the marble from the mountain's heart
Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom
Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art
Carved night, and chiselled shadow : be the tomb
That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow
His record of rebellion. Not the day
Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,
Touching this marble : darkness, none knows how,
And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.
So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

CCXIII.

JOHN WEBSTER.

THUNDER : the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.

Night : east, west, south, and northward, very night.

Star upon struggling star strives into sight,

Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.

The very throne of night, her very crown,

A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.

Song from the highest of heaven's imperious height

Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.

Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime,

Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time

Shown in the spherul orbit of a glass

Revolving. Earth cries out from all her graves.

Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,

Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

CCXIV.

ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF
THE JEWS.*(Written June, 1882.)*

O SON of man, by lying tongues adored,
By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod
In carnage deep as ever Christian trod
Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred
And incense from the trembling tyrant's horde,
Brute worshippers of wielders of the rod,
Most murderous even of all that call thee God,
Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord ;—
Face loved of little children long ago,
Head hated of the priests and rulers then,
If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine
Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,
Say, was not this thy Passion to foreknow
In death's worst hour the works of Christian men?

CCXV.

HOPE AND FEAR.

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer
Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope
Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,
And makes for joy the very darkness dear
That gives her wide wings play ; nor dreams that fear
At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
What once being known leaves time no power to appal ;
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—
“ *Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.*”

CCXVI.

TO THE GENIUS OF ETERNAL SLUMBER.

SLEEP, thou art named eternal! Is there then
No chance of waking in thy noiseless realm?
Come there no fretful dreams to overwhelm
The feverish spirits of o'erlaboured men?
Shall conscience sleep where thou art; and shall pain
Lie folded with tired arms around her head,
And memory be stretched upon a bed
Of ease, whence she shall never rise again?
O Sleep, that art eternal! Say, shall Love
Breathe like an infant slumbering at thy breast?
Shall hope there cease to throb; and shall the smart
Of things impossible at length find rest?
Thou answerest not. The poppy-heads above
Thy calm brows sleep. How cold, how still thou art!

CCXVII.

INEVITABLE CHANGE.

REBUKE me not! I have nor wish nor skill
To alter one hair's breadth in all this house
Of Love, rising with domes so luminous
And air-built galleries on life's topmost hill!
Only I know that fate, chance, years that kill,
Change that transmutes, have aimed their darts at us;
Envyng each lovely shrine and amorous
Reared on earth's soil by man's too passionate will.

Dread thou the moment when these glittering towers,
These adamantine walls and gates of gems,
Shall fade like forms of sun-forsaken cloud;
When dulled by imperceptible chill hours,
The golden spires of our Jerusalems
Shall melt to mist and vanish in night's shroud!

CCXVIII.

THE JEWS' CEMETERY.

Lido of Venice.

A TRACT of land swept by the salt sea-foam,
Fringed with acacia flowers, and billowy deep
In meadow-grasses, where tall poppies sleep,
And bees athirst for wilding honey roam.
How many a bleeding heart hath found its home
Under these hillocks which the sea-mews sweep !
Here knelt an outcast race to curse and weep,
Age after age, 'neath heaven's unanswering dome.

Sad is the place, and solemn. Grave by grave,
Lost in the dunes, with rank weeds overgrown,
Pines in abandonment ; as though unknown,
Uncared for, lay the dead, whose records pave
This path neglected ; each forgotten stone
Wept by no mourner but the moaning wave.

CCXIX.

A CRUCIFIX IN THE ETSCH THAL.

BLUE mists lie curled along the sullen stream :

Clouds furl the pine-clad highlands whence we came :

Stage after stage, interminably tame,

Stretch the gaunt mountain-flanks without one gleam.

All things are frozen in a dull dead dream :

It is a twilight land without a name :

Each half-awakened hamlet seems the same

Home of grey want and misery supreme.

Heart-breaking is the world-old human strife

With niggard nature traced adown this vale

In records fugitive as human life.

Ah Christ ! The land is thine. Those tortured eyes,

That thorn-crowned brow, those mute lips, thin and pale,

Appeal from man's pain to the impiteous skies.

CCXX.

A DREAM OF BURIAL IN MID-OCEAN.

Down through the deep deep grey-green seas, in sleep,
Plunged my drowsed soul ; and ever on and on,
Hurrying at first, then where the faint light shone
Through fathoms twelve, with slackening fall did creep :
Nor touched the bottom of that bottomless steep,
But with a slow sustained suspension,
Buoyed 'mid the watery wildernesses wan,
Like a thin cloud in air, voyaged the deep.

Then all those dreadful faces of the sea,
Horned things abhorred and shapes intolerable,
Fixing glazed lidless eyes swam up to me,
And pushed me with their snouts, and coiled and fell
In spiral volumes writhing horribly—
Jagged fins grotesque, fanged ghastly jaws of hell.

CCXXI.

VENETIAN SUNRISE.

How often have I now outwatched the night
Alone in this grey chamber toward the sea
Turning its deep-arcaded balcony!
Round yonder sharp acanthus-leaves the light
Comes stealing, red at first, then golden bright ;
Till when the day-god in his strength and glee
Springs from the orient flood victoriously,
Each cusp is tipped and tongued with quivering white.
The islands that were blots of purple bloom,
Now tremble in soft liquid luminous haze,
Uplifted from the sea-floor to the skies ;
And dim discerned erewhile through roseate gloom,
A score of sails now stud the waterways,
Ruffling like swans afloat from paradise.

CCXXII.

MONTENEGRO.

THEY rose to where their sovran eagle sails,
They kept their faith, their freedom on the height,
Chaste, frugal, savage, arm'd by day and night
Against the Turk ; whose inroad nowhere scales
Their headlong passes, but his footstep fails,
And red with blood the crescent reels from fight
Before their dauntless hundreds, in prone flight
By thousands down the crags and thro' the vales.
O smallest among peoples ! rough rock-throne
Of Freedom ! warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years,
Great Tsernogora ! never since thine own
Black ridges drew the cloud and brake the storm
Has breathed a race of mightier mountaineers.

CCXXIII.

SONNET.

Written on Hearing of the Outbreak of the Polish Insurrection.

BLÓw ye the trumpet, gather from afar
The hosts to battle : be not bought and sold.
Arise, brave Poles, the boldest of the bold ;
Break through your iron shackles—fling them far.
O for those days of Piast, ere the Czar
Grew to his strength among his deserts cold ;
When even to Moscow's cupolas were rolled
The growing murmurs of the Polish war !
Now must your noble anger blaze out more
Than when from Sobieski, clan by clan,
The Moslem myriads fell, and fled before—
Than when Zamoysky smote the Tartar Khan !
Than earlier, when on the Baltic shore
Boleslas drove the Pomeranian.

CCXXIV.

A RECUSANT.

THE Church stands there beyond the orchard-blooms ;
How yearningly I gaze upon its spire !
Lifted mysterious through the twilight glooms,
Dissolving in the sunset's golden fire,
Or dim as slender incense morn by morn
Ascending to the blue and open sky.
For ever when my heart feels most forlorn
It murmurs to me with a weary sigh,
How sweet to enter in, to kneel and pray
With all the others whom we love so well !
All disbelief and doubt might pass away,
All peace float to us with its Sabbath bell.
Conscience replies, There is but one good rest,
Whose head is pillowed upon Truth's pure breast.

CCXXV.

FORGETFULNESS.

I ASK one boon of heaven ; I have indeed,
And I will tell it thankfully, filled high,
Nor ruffled, as I drank it, with a sigh,
The cup of joy ; to love has been my meed,
And to be loved—and oftentimes could I read
In others' hearts with mine a sympathy :
But joy and love beam on us but to die
And foster memory, most bitter weed.
And this has been my bane, to fling behind
One look into the west, where day dwells yet,
Then turn me shivering to the cold night wind
And dream of joys and loves that long have set :
'Tis for this sleepless viper of the mind
I ask one boon of heaven—to *forget*.

CCXXVI.

TO A BIRD

That Haunted the Waters of Laken in the Winter.

O MELANCHOLY bird !—a winter's day
Thou standest by the margin of the pool,
And taught by God dost thy whole being school
To patience, which all evil can allay ;
God has appointed thee the fish thy prey ;
And given thyself a lesson to the fool
Unthrifty, to submit to moral rule,
And his unthinking course by thee to weigh.
There need not schools nor the professor's chair,
Though these be good, true wisdom to impart ;
He who has not enough for thee to spare
Of time or gold, may yet amend his heart,
And teach his soul by brooks and rivers fair :
Nature is always wise in every part.

CCXXVII.

THE HARVEST HOME.

THE crimson moon, uprising from the sea,
With large delight foretells the harvest near :
Ye shepherds, now prepare your melody
To greet the soft appearance of her sphere ;
And, like a page enamoured of her train,
The star of evening glimmers in the west :
Then raise, ye shepherds, your observant strain,
That so of the Great Shepherd here are blest.
Our fields are full with the time-ripened grain,
Our vineyards with the purple clusters swell ;
Her golden splendour glimmers on the main,
And vales and mountains her bright glory tell :
Then sing, ye shepherds, for the time is come
When we must bring the enrichèd harvest home.

CCXXVIII.

A DREAM OF EGYPT.

"Where's my Serpent of old Nile?"

NIGHT sends forth many an eagle-wingèd dream
To soar through regions never known by day ;
And I by one of these was rapt away
To where the sunburnt Nile, with opulent stream
Makes teem the desert sand. My pomp supreme
Enriched the noon ; I spurned earth's common clay ;
For I was Antony and by me lay
That Snake whose sting was bliss. Nations did seem
But camels for the burden of our joy ;
Kings were our slaves ; our wishes glowed in the air
And grew fruition ; night grew day, day night,
Lest the high bacchanal of our loves should cloy ;
We reined the tiger, Life, with flower-crowned hair,
Abashlessly abandoned to delight.

CCXXIX.

IN THE LOUVRE.

A DINGY picture : others passed it by
Without a second glance. To me it seemed
Mine somehow, yet I knew not how, nor why :
It hid some mystic thing I once had dreamed,
As I suppose. A palace porch there stood,
With massy pillars and long front, where gleamed
Most precious sculptures ; but all scarred and seamed
By ruining Time. There, in a sullen mood,
A man was pacing o'er the desolate floor
Of weedy marble ; and the bitter waves
Of the encroaching sea crawled to his feet,
Gushing round tumbled blocks. I conned it o'er.
“Age-mouldering creeds !” said I, “a dread sea raves
To whelm the temples of our fond conceit.”

CCXXX.

WITCHES.

METHOUGHT I saw three sexless things of storm,
Like Macbeth's witches—creatures of the curse
That broods, the nightmare of the universe,
Over the womb and mortal births of form ;
And cloudlike in their train a vampyre swarm
Of hovering ills, each than the other worse,
Letcheries and hates that make this world a hearse
Wherein the heart of life is confined warm.
Said the First Witch : "I am Lust, the worm that feeds
Upon the buds of love ;" the Second said :
"I am the tyrant's tyrant, cruel Fear ;"
The Third : "I am the blight of evil deeds,
The murrain of sick souls," and in my ear
Whispered a name of paralysing dread.

CCXXXI.

THE HEART'S SACREDNESS.

A WRETCHED thing it were to have our heart
Like a broad highway or a populous street,
Where every idle thought has leave to meet,
Pause or pass on as in an open mart ;
Or like some roadside pool, which no nice art
Has guarded that the cattle may not beat
And foul it with a multitude of feet,
Till of the heavens it give back no part.
But keep thou thine a holy solitude,
For He who would walk there would walk alone ;
He who would drink there must be first endued
With single right to call that stream his own ;
Keep thou thine heart close fastened, unrevealed,
A fenced garden and a fountain sealed.

CCXXXII.

IN MEMORIAM : RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH,
Late Archbishop of Dublin.

HAST known at eve the sea without a sound
Lying in the beauty of descended rest,
Calm'd by the floating light upon its breast,
Stretch from thy foot unto the distant round ?
So gentle to the heart, and so profound
The sight of this man dead : for such a sleep
Hath followed on all tumult of the deep,
And surgy war of elements unbound.
The brow is changed that hath looked up alway,
Through shifting sky, on immortalities.
The soul that, spreading beyond life and death,
Glassed heaven the clearer as it grew in peace,
Now, after the last motion of the breath,
Tarrieth in the face. Oh, let us pray !

CCXXXIII.

THE LATTICE AT SUNRISE.

As on my bed at dawn I mused and prayed,
I saw my lattice pranked upon the wall,
The flaunting leaves and flitting birds withal—

A sunny phantom interlaced with shade ;
“Thanks be to heaven !” in happy mood I said,

“What sweeter aid my matins could befall
Than this fair glory from the East hath made ?

What holy sleights hath God, the Lord of all,
To bid us feel and see ! we are not free

To say we see not, for the glory comes
Nightly and daily, like the flowing sea ;

His lustre pierceth through the midnight glooms ;
And, at prime hour, behold ! He follows me
With golden shadows to my secret rooms !”

CCXXXIV.

THE BUOY-BELL.

How like the leper, with his own sad cry
Enforcing its own solitude, it tolls !
That lonely bell set in the rushing shoals,
To warn us from the place of jeopardy !
O friend of man ! sore-vexed by Ocean's power,
The changing tides wash o'er thee day by day ;
Thy trembling mouth is filled with bitter spray,
Yet still thou ringest on from hour to hour ;
High is thy mission, though thy lot is wild—
To be in danger's realm a guardian sound :
In seamen's dreams a pleasant part to bear,
And earn their blessing as the year goes round ;
And strike the key-note of each grateful prayer,
Breathed in their distant homes by wife or child.

CCXXXV.

ON STARTLING SOME PIGEONS.

A HUNDRED wings are dropt as soft as one
Now ye are lighted—lovely to my sight
The fearful circle of your gentle flight,
Rapid and mute, and drawing homeward soon ;
And then the sober chiding of your tone
As there ye sit from your own roof arraigning
My trespass on your haunts, so boldly done,
Sounds like a solemn and a just complaining!
O happy happy race ! for tho' there clings
A feeble fear about your timid clan,
Yet ye are blest ! with not a thought that brings
Disquietude, while proud and sorrowing man,
An eagle, weary of his mighty wings,
With anxious inquest fills his little span.

CCXXXVI.

THE OCEAN.

THE ocean at the bidding of the moon
For ever changes with his restless tide ;
Flung shoreward now, to be regathered soon
With kindly pauses of reluctant pride
And semblance of return : Anon—from home—
He issues forth anew, high ridg'd and free—
The gentlest murmur of his seething foam
Like armies whispering where great echoes be !
O leave me here upon this beach to rove,
Mute listener to that sound so grand and lone—
A glorious sound, deep drawn and strongly thrown,
And reaching those on mountain heights above,
To British ears (as who shall scorn to own ?)
A tutelar fond voice, a saviour-tone of Love !

CCXXXVII.

SUMMER GLOAMING.

It is a Summer's gloaming, faint and sweet,
A gloaming brightened by an infant moon
Fraught with the fairest light of middle June ;
The garden path rings hard beneath my feet,
And hark, O hear I not the gentle dews
Fretting the gentle forest in his sleep ?
Or does the stir of housing insects creep
Thus faintly on mine ear ? day's many hues
Waned with the paling light and are no more,
And none but drowsy pinions beat the air—
The bat is circling softly by my door,
And silent as the snow-flake leaves his lair,
In the dark twilight flitting here and there
Wheeling the self-same circuit o'er and o'er.

CCXXXVIII.

"FROM NIGHT TO NIGHT."

FROM night to night, through circling darkness whirled,
Day dawns, and wanes, and still leaves, as before
The shifting tides and the eternal shore :
Sources of life, and forces of the world,
Unseen, unknown, in folds of mystery furled,
Unseen, unknown, remain for evermore :—
To heaven-hid heights man's questioning soul would soar,
Yet falls from darkness unto darkness hurled !

Angels of light, ye spirits of the air,
Peopling of yore the dreamland of our youth,
Ye who once led us through those scenes so fair,
Lead now, and leave us near the realm of Truth :
Lo, if in dreams some truths we chanced to see,
Now in the truth some dreams may haply be.

CCXXXIX.

THE AFTERMATH.

It was late summer, and the grass again
Had grown knee-deep,—we stood, my love and I,
Awhile in silence where the stream runs by ;
Idly we listened to a plaintive strain,—
A young maid singing to her youthful swain,—
Ah me, dead days remembered make us sigh,
And tears will sometimes flow we know not why ;
If spring be past, I said, shall love remain ?

She moved aside, yet soon she answered me,
Turning her gaze responsive to mine own,—
*Spring days are gone, and yet the grass, we see
Unto a goodly height again hath grown ;
Dear love, just so love's aftermath may be
A richer growth than e'er spring-days have known.*

CCXL.

GOD-SEEKING.

GOD-SEEKING thou hast journeyed far and nigh.
On dawn-lit mountain-tops thy soul did yearn
To hear His trailing garments wander by ;
And where 'mid thunderous glooms great sunsets burn,
Vainly thou sought'st His shadow on sea and sky ;
Or gazing up, at noontide, could'st discern
Only a neutral heaven's indifferent eye
And countenance austerely taciturn.

Yet whom thou soughtest I have found at last ;
Neither where tempest dims the world below
Nor where the westering daylight reels aghast
In conflagrations of red overthrow :
But where this virgin brooklet silvers past,
And yellowing either bank the king-cups blow.

CCXLI.

HISTORY.

DARKLY, as by some gloomèd mirror glassed,
Herein at times the brooding eye beholds
The great scarred visage of the pompous Past ;
But oftener only the embroidered folds
And soiled regality of his rent robe,
Whose tattered skirts are ruined dynasties
And cumber with their trailing pride the globe,
And sweep the dusty ages in our eyes ;
Till the world seems a world of husks and bones
Where sightless Sëers and Immortals dead,
Kings that remember not their awful thrones,
Invincible armies long since vanquished,
And powerless potentates and foolish sages
Lie 'mid the crumbling of the massy ages.

CCXLII.

THE FIRST KISS.

If only in dreams may Man be fully blest,
Is heav'n a dream? Is she I claspt a dream?—
Or stood she here even now where dew-drops gleam
And miles of furze shine golden down the West?
I seem to clasp her still—still on my breast
Her bosom beats—I see the blue eyes beam :—
I think she kiss'd these lips, for now they seem
Scarce mine : so hallow'd of the lips they press'd!

Yon thicket's breath—can that be eglantine?
Those birds—can they be morning's choristers?
Can this be Earth? Can these be banks of furze?
Like burning bushes fired of God they shine!
I seem to know them, though this body of mine
Pass'd into spirit at the touch of hers!

CCXLIII.

FORESHADOWINGS.

(THE STARS IN THE RIVER.)

THE mirrored stars lit all the bulrush spears,
And all the flags and broad-leaved lily-isles ;
The ripples shook the stars to golden smiles,
Then smoothed them back to happy golden spheres.
We rowed—we sang ; her voice seemed, in mine ears,
An angel's, yet with woman's dearest wiles ;
But shadows fell from gathering cloudy piles
And ripples shook the stars to fiery tears.

God shaped the shadows like a phantom boat
Where sate her soul and mine in Doom's attire ;
Along the lily-isles I saw it float
Where ripples shook the stars to symbols dire ;
We wept—we kissed, while starry fingers wrote,
And ripples shook the stars to a snake of fire.

CCXLIV.

THE HEAVEN THAT WAS.

(A sleepless night in Venice.)

WHEN Hope lies dead—Ah, when 'tis death to live,
And wrongs remembered make the heart still bleed,
Better are Sleep's kind lies for Life's blind need
Than truth, if lies a little peace can give ;
A little peace ! 'tis thy prerogative
O Sleep ! to lend it ; thine to quell or feed
This love that starves—this starving soul's long greed,
And bid Regret, the queen of hell, forgive.

Yon moon that mocks me thro' the uncurtained glass
Recalls that other night, that other moon,
That hour with her along the grey lagoon,
The voices from the lantern'd gondolas,
The kiss, the breath, the flashing eyes, the swoon
Of throbbing stillness : all the heaven that was !

CCXLV.

NATURA BENIGNA.

WHAT power is this? what witchery wins my feet
To peaks so sheer they scorn the cloaking snow
All silent as the emerald gulfs below,
Down whose ice-walls the wings of twilight beat?
What thrill of earth and heaven—most wild, most sweet—
What answering pulse that all the senses know,
Comes leaping from the ruddy eastern glow
Where, far away, the skies and mountains meet?

Mother, 'tis I once more : I know thee well,
Yet that throb comes, an ever-new surprise!
O Mother and Queen, beneath the olden spell
Of silence, gazing from thy hills and skies!
Dumb mother, struggling with the years to tell
The secret at thy heart through helpless eyes!

CCXLVI.

NATURA MALIGNA.

THE Lady of the Hills with crimes untold
Followed my feet, with azure eyes of prey ;
By glacier-brink she stood,—by cataract-spray,—
When mists were dire, or avalanche-echoes rolled.
At night she glimmered in the death-wind cold,
And if a foot-print shone at break of day,
My flesh would quail but straight my soul would say :
“ ’Tis her’s whose hand God’s mightier hand doth hold.”

I trod her snow-bridge, for the moon was bright,
Her icicle-arch across the sheer crevasse,
When lo, she stood ! . . . God bade her let me pass :
Then fell the bridge ; and, in the sallow light
Adown the chasm, I saw her cruel-white,
And all my wondrous days as in a glass.

CCXLVII.

A DREAM.

BENEATH the loveliest dream there coils a fear :—

Last night came she whose eyes are memories now,

Her far-off gaze seemed all-forgetful how

Love dimmed them once ; so calm they shone and clear

“Sorrow (I said) hath made me old, my dear ;

’Tis I, indeed, but grief doth change the brow,—

A love like mine a seraph’s neck might bow,—

Vigils like mine would blanch an angel’s hair.”

Ah, then I saw, I saw the sweet lips move !

I saw the love-mists thickening in her eyes,—

I heard wild wordless melodies of love

Like murmur of dreaming brooks in Paradise ;

And, when upon my neck she fell, my dove,

I knew her hair though heavy of amaranth-spice.

CCXLVIII.

THE BROOK RHINE.

SMALL current of the wilds afar from men,
 Changing and sudden as a baby's mood ;
 Now a green babbling rivulet in the wood,
Now loitering broad and shallow through the glen,
Or threading 'mid the naked shoals, and then
 Brattling against the stones, half mist, half flood,
 Between the mountains where the storm-clouds brood ;
And each change but to wake or sleep again.

Pass on, young stream, the world has need of thee ;
 Far hence a mighty river on its breast
Bears the deep-laden vessels to the sea ;
Far hence wide waters feed the vines and corn.
Pass on, small stream, to so great purpose born,
 On to the distant toil, the distant rest.

CCXLIX.

TO NIGHT.

MYSTERIOUS Night! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
And lo! Creation widened in man's view.

Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find,
Whilst flow'r and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
Why do we then shun Death with anxious strife?
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?

CCL.

WHAT art Thou, Mighty One, and where Thy seat?
Thou broodest on the calm that cheers the lands,
And Thou dost bear within Thine awful hands
The rolling thunders and the lightnings fleet:
Stern on Thy dark-wrought car of cloud and wind
Thou guid'st the northern storm at night's dead noon,
Or on the red wing of the fierce monsoon
Disturb'st the sleeping giant of the Ind.
In the drear silence of the Polar span
Dost Thou repose? or in the solitude
Of sultry tracts, where the lone caravan
Hears nightly howl the tiger's hungry brood?
Vain thought, the confines of His throne to trace
Who glows through all the fields of boundless space!

CCLI.

As yonder lamp in my vacated room
With arduous flame disputes the darksome night,
And can, with its involuntary light,
But lifeless things that near it stand, illumine ;
Yet all the while it doth itself consume ;
And, ere the sun begin its heavenly height
With courier beams that meet the shepherd's sight,
There, whence its life arose, shall be its tomb.

So wastes my light away. Perforce confined
To common things, a limit to its sphere,
It shines on worthless trifles undesigned,
With fainter ray each hour imprison'd here.
Alas ! to know that the consuming mind
Shall leave its lamp cold, ere the sun appear !

CCLII.

TIME AND DEATH.

I SAW old Time, destroyer of mankind ;
Calm, stern, and cold he sate, and often shook
And turned his glass, nor ever cared to look
How many of life's sands were still behind.
And there was Death, his page, aghast to find
How tremblingly, like aspens o'er a brook
His blunted dart fell harmless ; so he took
His master's scythe, and idly smote the wind.
Smite on, thou gloomy one, with powerless aim !
For Sin, thy mother, at her dying breath
Withered that arm, and left thee but a name.
Hope closed the grave, when He of Nazareth,
Who led captivity His captive, came
And vanquished the great conquerors, Time and Death.

CCLIII.

LIBERTATIS SACRA FAMES.

ALBEIT nurtured in democracy,
And liking best that state republican
Where every man is kinglike and no man
Is crowned above his fellows, yet I see,
Spite of this modern fret for Liberty,
Better the rule of One, whom all obey,
Than to let clamorous demagogues betray
Our freedom with the kiss of anarchy.
Wherefore I love them not whose hands profane
Plant the red flag upon the piled-up street
For no right cause, beneath whose ignorant reign
Arts, Culture, Reverence, Honour, all things fade,
Save Treason and the dagger of her trade,
And Murder with his silent bloody feet.

CCLIV.

THE EVENING CLOUD.

A CLOUD lay cradled near the setting sun,
A gleam of crimson tinged its braided snow ;
Long had I watched the glory moving on
O'er the still radiance of the Lake below.
Tranquil its spirit seem'd, and floated slow !
Even in its very motion there was rest :
While every breath of eve that chanced to blow,
Wafted the traveller to the beauteous West.
Emblem, methought, of the departed soul !
To whose white robe the gleam of bliss is given ;
And by the breath of mercy made to roll
Right onwards to the golden gate of Heaven,
Where to the eye of Faith it peaceful lies,
And tells to man his glorious destinies.

CCLV.

FROSTED TREES.

OH, what a goodly and a glorious show!
The stately trees have decked themselves with white,
And stand transfigured in a robe of light;
Wearing for each lost leaf a flake of snow.
The rising sun shines through them with a glow
Of gold amid the silver; while a bright
But hapless bird comes hovering into sight,
Amazed at the wan world above, below.

What was the ivory house which Ahab made
Compared with Nature's fretwork rich and rare,
In every grove with lavish wealth displayed?
And oh, if frozen mist appears so fair,
How will those "many mansions" be arrayed,
Which Love is fashioning in celestial air!

CCLVI.

THE WORLD'S DEATH-NIGHT.

I THINK a stormless night-time shall ensue
Unto the world, yearning for hours of calm :
Not these the end,—nor sudden-closing palm
Of a God's hand beneath the skies we knew,
Nor fall from a fierce heaven of fiery dew
In place of the sweet dewfall, the world's balm,
Nor swell of elemental triumph-psalm
Round the long-buffeted bulk, rent through and
through.

But in the even of its endless night,
With shoreless floods of moonlight on its breast,
And baths of healing mist about its scars,
An instant sums its circling years of flight,
And the tired earth hangs crystallised into rest,
Girdled with gracious watchings of the stars.

CCLVII.

. THE SOUL STITHY.

My soul, asleep between its body-throes,
Mid leagues of darkness watched a furnace glare,
And breastless arms that wrought laborious there,—
Power without plan, wherefrom no purpose grows,—
Welding white metal on a forge with blows,
Whence streamed the singing sparks like flaming hair,
Which whirling gusts ever abroad would bear :
And still the stithy hammers fell and rose.

And then I knew those sparks were souls of men,
And watched them driven like stars before the wind,
A myriad died and left no trace to tell ;
An hour like will-o'-the-wisps some lit the fen ;
Now one would leave a trail of fire behind :
And still the stithy hammers rose and fell.

CCLVIII.

"FAIR STAR OF EVENING."

FAIR Star of Evening, Splendour of the West,
Star of my country!—on the horizon's brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom ; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
Should'st be my Country's emblem ; and should'st wink
Bright Star ! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There ! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, it is England ; there it lies.
Blessings be on you both ! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory ! I with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

CCLIX.

ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN
REPUBLIC.

ONCE did She hold the gorgeous East in fee ;
And was the safeguard of the West : the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a Maiden City, bright and free ;
No guile seduced, no force could violate ;
And, when She took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.

And what if she has seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay ;
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day :
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great, is passed away.

CCLX.

TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE.

TOUSSAINT, thou most unhappy man of men !
Whether the whistling rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den ;—
O miserable Chieftain ! where and when
Wilt thou find patience ? Yet die not ; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow ;
Though fallen Thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou has left behind
Powers that will work for thee ; air, earth, and skies ;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee ; thou hast great allies ;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and Man's unconquerable mind.

CCLXI.

ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND.

Two Voices are there ; one is of the Sea,
One of the Mountains ; each a mighty Voice ;
In both from age to age Thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen Music, Liberty !
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him ; but hast vainly striven :
Thou from the Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.

Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft :
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left ;
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That mountain Floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee !

CCLXII.

MILTON.

MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee : she is a fen
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.

Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

CCLXIII.

TRANSIENT JOY.

SURPRISED by joy—impatient as the wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, deep-buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

CCLXIV.

THE TIMES THAT ARE.

O FRIEND ! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,
To think that now our Life is only drest
For show ; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
Or groom !—We must run glittering like a Brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest :
The wealthiest man among us is the best ;
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry ; and these we adore :
Plain living and high thinking are no more :
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone : our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

CCLXV.

TO SLEEP.

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one ; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring ; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky
By turns have all been thought of, yet I lie
Sleepless ; and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees ;
And the first Cuckoo's melancholy cry.

Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep ! by any stealth :
So do not let me wear to-night away :
Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth ?
Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health !

CCLXVI.

AFTER-THOUGHT.

(Conclusion to the Sonnets to the River Duddon.)

I THOUGHT of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away.—Vain sympathies!
For, backward, Duddon! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the stream and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent land we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

CCLXVII.

"THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US."

THE world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;
For this, for every thing, we are out of tune ;

It moves us not—Great God ! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreath'd horn.

CCLXVIII.

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

(Early Morning.)

EARTH has not anything to show more fair :
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty :
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

CCLXIX.

BY THE SEA : EVENING.

It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free ;
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea :
Listen ! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Dear Child ! dear Girl ! that walkest with me here.
If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine :
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

CCLXX.

MUTABILITY.

FROM low to high doth dissolution climb,
And sink from high to low, along a scale
Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail :
A musical but melancholy chime,
Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,
Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.
Truth fails not ; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more ; drop like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

The Editor desires to express here his genuine indebtedness to Messrs. Macmillan & Co., for kindly waiving their copyright in the sonnets of Lord Tennyson, and in those of one or two other writers: to Messrs. Bentley & Sons, in connection with the sonnet by Mrs. Butler (Frances Anne Kemble); and to all copyright-holders with whom he has had communication—begging them to accept this acknowledgment of their uniform courtesy.

NOTES.

No. i. DEAN ALFORD (1810-1871). The poems of the late Dean Alford are characterised by refinement and depth of feeling.

No. iv. WILLIAM ALLINGHAM. This sonnet first appeared in a little book edited by Mrs. Isa Knox Craig, published in 1863, and entitled *Poems: An Offering to Lancashire*. Mr. Allingham's several volumes are all noteworthy for the same keenness of vision as regards the aspects of nature: and I may draw special attention to his charming sonnet-transcripts from nature, which have lately, at intervals, appeared in *The Athenæum*.

Nos. v.-vii. MATTHEW ARNOLD. These sonnets adequately represent the work of Mr. Arnold in this direction. They are to be found in the volumes entitled *Poems: Narrative and Elegiac*, and *Poems: Dramatic and Lyric*, published by Macmillan & Co. Familiar portions of the familiar work of one of the leading poets of our time, they thus call for no special comment.

Nos. viii.-xi. ALFRED AUSTIN. Mr. Alfred Austin has written some fine sonnets, his preferred form evidently being the Shakespearian. Mr. Austin's work is mostly purely lyric and dramatic, though he shows such unmistakable faculty for sonnet-writing that he might well publish a short volume of poetic work in this form, and thus enter more directly into the lists with acknowledged masters of the craft. His earlier volumes are entitled *The Human Tragedy*, *The Tower of Babel*, *Interludes*, *The Golden Age*, and *The Season* (Blackwood & Sons); and his later, *Savonarola*, *Soliloquies in Song*, *At the Gate of the Convent*, and *Prince Lucifer* (Macmillan & Co.)—the last-named published in 1887. One of Mr. Austin's pleasantest characteristics as a poet is his intense love of nature, more especially of nature in her spring aspects: also, I may add, a very ardent love of Country and pride therein. The four sonnets I have selected seem to me among the best, but here is another excellent one representing Mr. Austin in his last-named characteristic: it is one of three addressed to England.

TO ENGLAND.

(Written in Mid-Channel.)

Now upon English soil I soon shall stand,
 Homeward from climes that fancy deems more fair;
 And well I know that there will greet me there
 No soft foam fawning upon smiling strand,
 No scent of orange-groves, no zephyrs bland;
 But Amazonian March, with breast half bare
 And sleety arrows whistling through the air,
 Will be my welcome from that burly land.
 Yet he who boasts his birth-place yonder lies
 Owns in his heart a mood akin to scorn
 For sensuous slopes that bask 'neath Southern skies,
 Teeming with wine and prodigal of corn,
 And, gazing through the mist with misty eyes,
 Blesses the brave bleak land where he was born.

Since the above note was written, the following fine sonnet has appeared in *The Athenæum*:—

When acorns fall, and swallows troop for flight,
 And hope matured slow mellows to regret,
 And Autumn, pressed by Winter for his debt,
 Drops leaf on leaf till she be beggared quite;
 Should then the crescent moon's unselfish light
 Gleam up the sky just as the sun doth set,
 Her brightening gaze, though day and dark have met,
 Prolongs the gloaming and retards the night.
 So, fair young life, new risen upon mine
 Just as it owns the edict of decay
 And Fancy's fires should pale and pass away,
 My menaced glory takes a glow from thine,
 And, in the deepening sundown of my day,
 Thou with thy dawn delayest my decline.

BENJAMIN D'ISRAELI, EARL OF BEACONSFIELD. Lord Beaconsfield, even his most ardent admirers would admit, gave no evidence that he was possessed of the creative faculty in verse; an ardent imagination he undoubtedly had. He wrote, so far as I am aware, only two sonnets, one of which—that on Wellington—certainly deserves a place in any sonnet-anthology. I do not insert it in the body of this book, however, as its composition was fortuitous, and as its author has no broader claim to appear among genuine poets. There is a certain applicability to himself, in Lord Beaconsfield's words addressed to Wellington, for even the most bigoted opponent of the great statesman would hardly deny his possession of "a continuous state of ordered impulse," or his "serenity" when all were "troubled."

WELLINGTON.

Not only that thy puissant arm could bind
 The tyrant of a world ; and, conquering Fate,
 Enfranchise Europe, do I deem thee great ;
 But that in all thy actions I do find
 Exact propriety : no gusts of mind
 Fitful and wild, but that continuous state
 Of ordered impulse mariners await
 In some benignant and enriching wind,—
 The breath ordained of Nature. Thy calm mien
 Recalls old Rome, as much as thy high deed ;
 Duty thine only idol, and serene
 When all are troubled ; in the utmost need
 Prescient ; thy country's servant ever seen,
 Yet sovereign of thyself, whate'er may speed.

No. xii. H. T. MACKENZIE BELL. From *Old Year Leaves: A Volume of Collected Verse* (1883). Mr. Mackenzie Bell is also the author of an interesting biography of Charles Whitehead (*q.v.*) published in 1885 (Fisher Unwin) under the title *A Forgotten Genius*.

No. xiii. LOUISA S. BEVINGTON (GÜGGENBERGER). From *Poems and Sonnets* (Stock, 1882). Probably Miss Bevington's—to call her by the name she is publicly known by—highest poetic accomplishment is the piece in lyrical measures entitled “In the Valley of Remorse,” printed in the same volume.

No. xiv. S. L. BLANCHARD (1804-1845). From *Lyric Offerings*, 1828. The poems of this writer have a certain delicacy of sentiment rather than any robust qualities. “Wishes and Youth” is one of his strongest.

No. xv. MATHILDE BLIND. Miss Blind, well-known through her admirable translation of Strauss, her edition of Shelley's *Poems* in Baron Tauchnitz's series, her genuinely romantic novel, *Tarantella*, her interesting monograph of “George Eliot,” and her highly sympathetic study of Madame Roland, both in the *Eminent Women* series, and various miscellaneous writings, has not published much in verse, but what she has given to the public is of no ordinary quality. Her slight first volume, entitled *St. Oran ; and other Poems*, had a deserved success on its appearance two or three years ago, and at once gave her high rank as a poet. This year (1886) she published a narrative poem entitled *The Heather on Fire*, an eloquent protest against the wrongs inflicted on the crofters of the West Highlands.

(No. xv.) This very beautiful sonnet has an interesting history. I have heard that, shortly after the death of the late Bishop of Manchester, it was reprinted without the author's knowledge and sent in the name of 1000 operatives to Mrs. Fraser, the much-

esteemed Bishop's widow. It is the lot of few authors to have so genuine, unsolicited, and unexpected a compliment paid to them, in this case all the more remarkable from the fact of Miss Blind having been quite unknown to those who at once paid this compliment to poetry and showed a fine and noble sympathy.

No. xvi. is interesting, as the author's first sonnet. It certainly does not read like a tentative effort.

Nos. xviii.-xxii. WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT. These sonnets are excerpted from the third edition of that remarkable volume, *The Love Sonnets of Proteus*. They have more of the Shakespearian *ring* than perhaps any sonnets of our time. That "Proteus" can at times touch a very high note indeed will be understood by any one who reads the sonorous and majestic sonnet on "The Sublime" (xxii.). Structurally they cannot be considered satisfactory.

No. xxiii. WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES (1762-1850). The sonnets of the Rev. W. L. Bowles are now more interesting historically than intrinsically. Graceful, with an air of plaintive melancholy, as they are, they would be practically entirely forgotten were it not for the influence they undoubtedly exercised over Coleridge. It must, of course, be borne in mind that they appeared at a time when a new and natural note was as welcome as the humblest bird-strain in a delayed Spring. Nor was Coleridge alone in admiring Bowles' sonnets, for they were undoubtedly widely read and appreciated. The fount of his poetic genius, however, soon ran dry, and he is now read more by the student or the critic than by the general poetry-loving public. Among the best of his sonnets are the two not very impressive pieces on "Parted Love," beginning "How shall I meet thee, Summer, wont to fill," and "There is strange music in the stirring wind."

No. xxiv. E. H. BRODIE. From a volume containing many excellent and a few noteworthy sonnets. *Sonnets. By E. H. Brodie.* (G. Bell & Sons) 1885.

No. xxv. OLIVER MADOX BROWN (1855-1874). No sonnet-anthology would be complete without this sombre example; not only because of its manifest intrinsic merit, but also on account of the author's unique position among creative minds. The son of Mr. Ford Madox Brown, the eminent artist (whose mural paintings in the New Town Hall at Manchester, now nearing completion, will one day be the goal of many art-lovers), Oliver seemed to have been destined by nature to fill ably the positions of a poet, a novelist, and an artist. One can almost imagine any greatness for the manhood of that writer who, as a boy, achieved such marvellous success. Dying at the early age of nineteen, he was an even more "marvellous boy" than Chatterton, in so much that he was essentially a less morbid development. He had, of course, innumerable advantages which his more unfortunate predecessor

had not : among them his father's household, comfortable circumstances, and the friendship of men like Rossetti. *The Black Swan*, with all its demerits, remains a story of tragic power and beauty, perhaps to be read and valued in the future as we now read and value *Wuthering Heights*. It is from the MS. of this romance that the sonnet I have quoted is taken, that is, indirectly, for it occurs in print in the *Memoir and Literary Remains of O.M.B.*, edited by William M. Rossetti and Dr. F. Hueffer. Those who only know (if, indeed, they can thus be said to know) this brilliant and precocious genius by *Gabriel Denver*, as *The Black Swan* was called in its mutilated published form, should not fail to peruse the two fascinating volumes edited by Mr. W. M. Rossetti and Dr. Hueffer. Here, in addition to the original version of *The Black Swan*, are *The Dwale Bluth*, *Hebditch's Legacy*, and other deeply interesting fragments. Considerable personal information will also be found in Mr. John H. Ingram's interesting monograph, published in 1883, by Elliot Stock. There exist two other sonnets by Brown. One was written for a picture by Miss Spartali (Mrs. Stillman) ; but although it has one noticeably fine line—the third—its chief interest lies in the fact that it was written in the author's fourteenth year, and was one of several of contemporaneous compositions destroyed by Brown in a moment of irritation or dissatisfaction. It survived the fate of its brethren owing to its having been inscribed on the frame of Miss Spartali's picture. The first three lines run—

“Leaning against the window, rapt in thought,
Of what sweet past do thy soft brown eyes dream,
That so expressionlessly sweet they seem?”

His third remaining sonnet, more recently come to light, was first printed in Mr. Ingram's *Biographical Sketch*—and has not, so far as I know, appeared elsewhere. It has no title, but I fancy that “The Past World” would be an applicable one :—

THE PAST WORLD.

Made indistinguishable 'mid the boughs,
With saddened weary ever-restless eyes
The weird Chameleon of the Past World lies,—
Like some old wretched man whom God allows
To linger on : still joyless life endows
His wasted frame, and memory never dies
Within him, and his only sympathies
Withered with his last comrade's last carouse.
Methinks great Dante knew thee not of old,—
Else some fierce glutton all insatiate
Compelled within some cage for food to wait
He must have made thee, and his verse have told
How thou in vain thy ravening tried'st to sate
On flylike souls of triflers overbold.

Concerning this sonnet, Mr. Ingram, after referring to its "virility of thought" and "picturesque originality," subsequently to printing it adds:—"There is something truly grandiose and weird in the idea enunciated by the first eight lines of this sonnet. The likening of a surviving member of the past world's inhabitants to an old reveller who has outlived all his joys, his comrades, and his sympathies, is not only very striking, but is very unlike what would have been looked for in the work of a boy." For myself, I must say that the sonnet seems to me eminently unsatisfactory in so far that there is a confusion of metaphor and simile in the octave, each demanding full realisation on the part of the reader, and each essentially distinct, irrelative. The first three lines present us with a striking and imaginative metaphor, but immediately we have to change our mental focus, and see in this "chameleon" an old debauchee, brooding over past orgies with boon companions as evil as himself. Then, again, in the striking last lines of the sestet there is a return to the chameleon metaphor. Otherwise the poem is certainly an imaginative one, and doubly impressive as being the work of one so young.

I may here take occasion to print a sonnet by another youthful poet, Mr. Robert Lawrence Binyon: entitled "The Past, Asleep." It was written in the author's sixteenth year, and if it has not the imaginative intensity of Oliver Madox Brown's "Past World," it has greater consistency, and exhibits more marked maturity of conception:—

THE PAST, ASLEEP.

When I look back upon my naked past,
 In its hushed slumber like a sleeping snake,
 I shudder—lest the weary coil should wake,
 And wound me with its subtle pain, and cast
 Its barbed stings in my face. It hath me fast;
 I cannot from this secret chain outbreak;
 Nor would I; for its burden doth not ache,
 Save when I gaze too near, then shrink, aghast.
 Nay, it hath beauty, when it lies in peace,
 But bitter is the poison of its fangs,
 And the barbed arrows wound, as wounds a knife.
 Yet sweeter far to bear the pricks and pangs,
 Than with a deaf heart let those coils increase,
 Till at the last they crush me, and my life.

In connection with Oliver Madox Brown I may quote a couple of fine sonnets by two among the many who expressed in verse their grief or regret; with several others they are to be found in Mr. Ingram's memoir. The first is by Oliver's father, Mr. Ford Madox Brown—one who is not only a great artist but a cultivated student of English literature, and who has on several occasions proved his ability to use the pen as well as the brush.

O. M. B.

(Died November, 1874.)

As one who strives from some fast steamer's side
 To note amid the backward spinning foam
 And keep in view some separate wreath therefrom,
 That cheats him even the while he views it glide
 (Merging in other foam-tracks stretching wide),
 So strive we to keep clear that day our home
 First saw you riven—a memory thence to roam,
 A shattered blossom on the eternal tide !

O broken promises that showed so fair !
 O morning sun of wit set in despair !
 O brows made smooth as with the Muse's chrism !
 O Oliver ! ourselves Death's cataclysm
 Must soon o'ertake—but not in vain—not where
 Some vestige of your thought outspans the abysm !

(April, 1883.)

"F. M. B."

The other sonnet is by Mr. Theodore Watts. Mr. Watts and Rossetti had spent the night previous to Oliver Brown's funeral in Rossetti's studio in talk upon the sad mystery of the young novelist's early death, and on the drive back from "the place of sleep" the following sonnet was composed by Mr. Watts, while Rossetti thought out the one on Brown, which is to be found in his *Ballads and Sonnets* :—

IN A GRAVEYARD.

(12th November, 1874.)

Farewell to thee and to our dreams farewell—
 Dreams of high deeds and golden days of thine,
 Where once again should Arts' twin powers combine—
 The painter's wizard-wand, the poet's spell !

Though Death strikes free, careless of heaven and hell—
 Careless of Man—of Love's most lovely shrine—
 Yet must Man speak—must ask of heaven a sign—
 That this wild world is God's and all is well.

Last night we mourned thee, cursing eyeless Death,
 Who, sparing sons of Baal and Ashtoreth,
 Must needs slay thee, with all the world to slay ; —
 But round this grave the winds of winter say

"On earth what hath the poet ? An alien breath.
 Night holds the keys that ope the doors of Day."

Nos. xxvi.-xxx. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1809-1861).

The poetry of Mrs. Browning is too widely familiar for any comment to be called for. Only those who have made a study of contemporary poetry, especially that written by women, realise how

strong her influence has been. These beautiful "Portuguese Sonnets" are among the finest of their kind in the language, revealing as they do the loving heart of a true woman as well as the plastic power of a poet. The sonnets of Shakespeare, those of Mrs. Browning, and those of Rossetti, must have an especial interest because of their intense personality.

Nos. xxxi.-xxxii. ROBERT BROWNING. Mr. Browning has written few poems in this form; probably he could count on the fingers of one hand all he would ever care to see in any anthology. No. xxxi. is to be found in the Browning Society's Papers, Part v.; also in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, where, I think, it first appeared. No. xxxii. is among a collection of statements in prose and verse, setting forth the separate writers' reasons for the faith that is in them, collected by Mr. Andrew Reid under the title, *Why I am a Liberal*, and published by Messrs. Cassell & Co. It is well known that not only did Landor never write a sonnet, but that he expressed his determination never to do so. But he came very near to inconsistency when he addressed to Robert Browning this beautiful fourteen line poem in blank verse:—

TO ROBERT BROWNING.

There is delight in singing, tho' none hear
Beside the singer; and there is delight
In praising, tho' the praiser sit alone
And see the prais'd far off him, far above.
Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,
Therefore on him no speech! and brief for thee,
Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man hath walkt along our roads with step
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse. But warmer climes
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing: the breeze
Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song.

W. S. LANDOR in *Works* (1876), vol. viii. p. 152.

Nos. xxxiii.-xxxiv. ROBERT BUCHANAN. These sonnets are from the section of *The Book of Orm* entitled "Coruiskin Sonnets." Of all Mr. Buchanan's poetic productions *The Book of Orm* is certainly the most individual, and is in some ways the most remarkable. It has unmistakable faults, but its beauties are equally unmistakable—and it certainly never has been done justice to. There is no living poet who has a keener eye for nature than has Mr. Buchanan—in this he is a true northerner. In dealing with natural aspects he is never or seldom the mere literary man, but the poet working from knowledge and familiarity as well as with insight. He has, however, written very few good sonnets *as sonnets*.

No. xxxv. SIR S. EGERTON BRYDGES (1762-1837). This sonnet, like those of Bowles, owes much of its reputation to the warm praise it received from certain eminent contemporaries of its author, including Wordsworth and Coleridge. It has, of course, genuine merit, though this is not one of those instances where we are likely to be induced to consider the Alexandrine at the close an unexpected charm (an Alexandrine also ends the octavo). The somewhat pompous author never, however, wrote anything better, though that he had some faculty for his art will be evident to any one who glances through his *Poems* (1807).

No. xxxvi. LORD BYRON (1788-1824). The genius of Byron was not one from which we might have expected good sonnet-work. He is greater in mass than in detail, in outlines than in delicate side-touchees—in a word, he is like a sculptor who hews a Titan out of a huge block, one whom we would never expect to be able, or to care, to delicately carve a cameo. That Byron could write sonnets, and that he could even write an exceptionally fine one, is evident from that which I have quoted. No. xxxvi. is an essentially noble sonnet in the Miltonic mould, recalling indeed Milton's famous sonnet on the Piedmontese massacre, and having some affinity to Wordsworth's equally noble sonnet on Toussaint (No. cclx.). It is hardly necessary to call to the reader's remembrance that Bonnivard, Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon," was, on account of his daring patriotism, interned in the first half of the 17th century in the dungeons of the Castle of Chillon, on the Lake of Geneva, by the tyrannical orders of the Duke of Savoy. He was ultimately released—not through the mercy of his enemy—but not until after long years of wretchedness, wherein his feet are said to have left traces on the worn stones of his prison-floor.

Nos. xxxvii-xxxviii. HALL CAINE. It is with pleasure I print these fine sonnets. There is no writer of the younger generation who has come more rapidly to the fore than Mr. Hall Caine, though as a poet he has not yet sought the opinion of the public. These sonnets appeared in *The Athenæum*, and are interesting not only from their intrinsic merit, but as evidence that Mr. Caine can himself compose a sonnet as well as write about sonnets and sonneteering. I have already, in the introductory note, referred to his valuable *Sonnets of Three Centuries* (Stock, 1882). Since then Mr. Caine has further confirmed his reputation by his *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, and by his powerful romances, *The Shadow of a Crime*, *A Son of Hagar*, and *The Deemster*.

No. xxxix. WILLIAM M. W. CALL. This impressive, if structurally unsatisfactory sonnet, is from Mr. Call's *Golden Histories* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1871). Mr. Call has written much, but has not succeeded in attracting wide notice. He has certainly, however,

written no other sonnet so fine as this. Glancing at it again, I find that the lines—

“I watch’d the great red sun, in clouds, go down,
An Orient King, that ’mid his bronzed slaves
Dies, leaning on his sceptre, with his crown”—

suggests an equally fine image, which I must quote from memory, not having Charles Wells’ *Joseph and his Brethren* at hand. Wells, in his fine dramatic poem, is picturing the sun setting seaward, viewed from a cliff-bound coast :—

“And like
A God gigantic, habited in gold,
Stepping from off a mount into the sea.”

No. xl. JOHN CLARE (1793-1864). Clare’s sonnets are irregular in structure, and in a sense they are only fourteen-line poems. They might as well as not be better, or worse, for being two or three lines shorter or longer. There is no *inevitableness* about them : one feels that the choice of vehicle has been purely arbitrary,—in a word, that they have not that essential characteristic—adequacy of sonnet-motive. Like all his work, however, they are characterised by the same winsome affection for and knowledge of the nature amidst which he spent his life. Clare’s poetry is often like a sunny and windy day bursting through the gloom of late winter.

No. xl. The last word is printed by Clare “drest,” but as Mr. Main has pointed out, and corrected in his *Treasury*, this is an obvious misprint for “deckt.”

Nos. xli.-xlii. HERBERT E. CLARKE. “The Assignation” is from Mr. Clarke’s latest volume, *Storm Drift* ; and “King of Kings” from its predecessor, *Songs in Exile* (Marcus Ward, 1879). Mr. Clarke has written several excellent sonnets.

Nos. xliii.-xlvii. HARTLEY COLERIDGE (1796-1849). Hartley Coleridge now ranks among the foremost sonneteers in our language : as in the case of Charles Tennyson-Turner, his reputation rests solely on his sonnet-work. Notwithstanding the reverent admiration he had for his more famous father, Hartley’s work betrays much more the influence of Wordsworth than of S. T. Coleridge. In this a wise instinct indubitably guided him. His father was not a sonneteer. There is a firmness of handling, a quiet autumnal tenderness and loveliness about Hartley’s sonnets that endows them with an endless charm for all who care for poetic beauty. Students should consult the notes in Mr. Main’s *Treasury* and the interesting *ana* in Mr. Caine’s *Sonnets of Three Centuries*. Of the sonnets I have quoted, the first is specially noteworthy. A friend has recorded the interesting fact that Hartley Coleridge’s

sonnets were all written impulsively, and never occupied more than ten minutes in composition. Probably, however, they were carefully revised at the author's leisure. A sonnet is not like a lyric proper—best in its very spontaneity and unguardedness. The impulse should be as keen, but the shaping power of the artist should come more into play. A sonnet is also the least likely of any poetic vehicle to be spoilt by discriminative revision; in nine cases out of ten it is greatly improved thereby.

No. xlviii. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834). There is no one of Coleridge's sonnets which can be pronounced distinctly satisfactory. The one I have given seems to me on the whole the best. The famous one on Schiller's *Robbers* has been much overrated—though Coleridge himself had a high opinion of it. Wordsworth showed his critical faculty when, on receipt of Dyce's *Sonnet-Anthology*, he referred to the insertion of "The Robbers" as a mistake, on the ground of "rant." I print it here:—

TO THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROBBERS."

Schiller ! that hour I would have wished to die,
If through the shuddering midnight I had sent,
From the dark dungeon of the tower time-rent,
That fearful voice, a famished father's cry ;
Lest in some after moment aught more mean
Might stamp me mortal. A triumphant shout
Black Horror screamed, and all her goblin rout
Diminished shrunk from the more withering scene.
Ah ! bard tremendous in sublimity !
Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
Wandering at eve with finely frenzied eye
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood,
Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood,
Then weep aloud in a wild ecstasy.

There are probably few readers of mature taste who would not consider Wordsworth's epithet "rant" as literally applicable. One learns with a sense of uncomfortable wonder that Coleridge himself—this supreme master of metrical music—considered the last six lines "strong and fiery !"

What a difference between this Schiller sonnet and the beautiful poem in fourteen lines entitled "Work without Hope." If these lines had only been adequately set in sonnet-mould, the result would have been a place for this poetic gem among the finest sonnets in the language:—

WORK WITHOUT HOPE.

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—

And Winter slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring !
And I, the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
Bloom, O ye amaranths ! bloom for whom ye may,
For me ye bloom not ! Glide, rich streams, away !
With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll :
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul ?
Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live.

No. xlix. SARA COLERIDGE (1803-1852). This sonnet is from the author's fairy-romance, *Phantasmion*, published in 1837. As, so far as I recollect, it has found a place in no previous anthology, nor even been referred to in appendices, I presume it has altogether escaped my brother-editors' notice.

Sara Coleridge had not less genius than her brother Hartley, but she had nothing like the same gift of expression. She resembled her famous father in her tendency to lyric music, while Hartley's genius was distinctly inclined to express itself in more monumental forms. This sonnet of hers loses much by separation from the context, but not so much as to render its appearance here inappropriate.

No. l. BESSIE CRAIGMYLE. From *Poems and Translations* (1886), a volume of verse written in early youth, and full of unusual promise.

No. li. DINAH MARIA CRAIK. The author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, has written much true poetry, and especially many charming lyrics—e.g., "Philip my King," "Rothesay Bay," etc.—though but few sonnets. (*Thirty Years: Poems Old and New*. Macmillan & Co., 1881.)

Nos. lii.-liv. DE VERE, SIR AUBREY (1788-1846). From *Sonnets: By the late Sir Aubrey de Vere, Bart.* (Pickering, 1875.)

The sonnets of Sir Aubrey de Vere are not nearly so widely known as they deserve to be. The high estimation in which Wordsworth (who was not given to over-estimate the poetic powers of his contemporaries) held them has been fully endorsed of late by the few who have made a special study of this fascinating section of poetic literature. The same author's *Mary Tudor* is a noticeable dramatic production, but it is by his sonnets that his name will grow in reputation. The following passage is from the interesting memoirs, prefacing the sonnets, by his distinguished son:—"The sonnet was with him to the last a favourite form of composition. This taste was fostered by the magnificent

sonnets of Wordsworth, whose genius he had early hailed, and whose friendship he regarded as one of the chief honours of his later life. For his earlier sonnets he had found a model chiefly in the Italian poets, especially Petrarch and Filicaja. Like Filicaja also, who so well deserved the inscription graven on his tomb, '*Qui gloriam literarum honestavit*,' he valued the sonnet the more because its austere brevity, its severity, and its majestic completeness fit it especially for the loftier themes of song. . . . The great modern master of the sonnet, Wordsworth, pronounced those of Sir Aubrey de Vere to be among the most perfect of our age. Whether they illustrated nature, embodied thought, or expressed imaginative emotion, his severe judgment noted in them the artist's hand faithful to the best ancient models, and the truthful soul of a poet."

He was as true a man as he was poet. What finer tribute could be paid to any one than the words uttered by a friend who bent above him as he lay upon his death-bed—"In that brow I see three things—Imagination, Reverence, and Honour."

Sir Aubrey de Vere's sonnets are divisible into sections, and I have endeavoured to select examples which are thoroughly representative.

No. liv. *The Children's Band.* The subject chosen by its author for this pathetic sonnet is one that has been little handled by writers. In all, some 30,000 children (varying in age from twelve to sixteen) from France—crying aloud on their march, "*Rendez-vous, Seigneur Jésus, votre Croix sainte!*"—and about 20,000 from Germany, followed the lead of the fanatic apostate monk Jacob, or, as he was more widely known, Job. Misery and fatigue, hunger and exposure, robbers and brutalities, caused the deaths of many hundreds of the poor children who had been the first to respond to the appeal for a new crusade made by Pope Innocent III. early in the 13th century. A great number reached Marseilles, and were there inveigled on board seven large ships by two scoundrels, Hugues Lefer and Guillaume Leporc; two of these vessels were wrecked, but the remaining five reached Egypt, where the unfortunate children were sold into Saracenic slavery. The youthful martyrs were avenged by the new general crusade that shortly followed, inaugurated at the Council of Latran, convoked by Innocent III. (*Vide Collin de Plancy's Légendes des Croisades.*)

Nos. lv.-lix. AUBREY DE VERE (the Younger). Mr. Aubrey de Vere is the third son of the last-named writer, and is a worthy inheritor of his father's genius. Mr. De Vere undoubtedly ranks among the foremost sonneteers of our time, and if he were to collect and print his sonnets in a volume by themselves they would most certainly gain wide appreciation. At present they are to be found in the volumes entitled *The Search after the Proserpine: and other Poems, Classical and Meditative*, and in *Alexander the Great: and other*

Poems (re-issue of the Poetical Works, vols. i. and iii. Kegan Paul & Co., 1884).

lv. *The Sun God*. If this magnificent sonnet had more rhythmic strength, it would be worthy to rank among the very finest in the language.

lvii. A lovely sonnet, with several alterations from its original appearance (l. 1, *tranquil beauty*; l. 2, *lovely*, etc.; ll. 3, 4, *And the most penetrating eye can trace No sad distraction in her harmless air*; l. 6, *an unknown grace*; l. 7, *surrounds her like a crystal atmosphere*; l. 8, *and love*; l. 12, *in the upper ether wove*; l. 13, *transcendent power*).

No. lx. RICHARD WATSON DIXON. Mr. Hall Caine, a generous and discriminating critic, says: "Canon Dixon affords probably by far the most striking instance of a living poet deserving the highest recognition yet completely unrecognised."

Nos. lxi.-lxiii. SYDNEY DOBELL (1824-1874). These powerful sonnets cannot be read without admiration. "The Army Surgeon" is terrible in its literality; especially thrilling are the lines commencing with "And as a raw brood" (l. 7). "The Common Grave" is deservedly a favourite with all who appreciate imaginative and powerful poetry; but as a sonnet it is badly constructed—the rhyme arrangement is extremely irregular, nor to a sensitive ear is there pleasure in *cried—side*, or in *down—on*. "Home: in War Time"—this sonnet has all the power of unexpectedness—but the transition from the peaceful home-scene, and the wife's loving hope and yearning, to the frightful battlefield where lie the decaying dead, though startlingly effective, is a cruelty to the reader having a powerful imagination: the word "carriage" in the last line is too horribly suggestive. Dobell can best be studied in the *Poetical Works, with Introductory Notice and Memoir by John Nichol, M.A., Oxon, LL.D.* 2 vols., 1875.

No. lxiv. AUSTIN DOBSON. Mr. Austin Dobson has written few sonnets, but "Don Quixote" well deserves a place in any anthology.

Nos. lxv., lxvi. THOMAS DOUBLEDAY (1790-1870). Mr. Doubleday's poetic work was mainly in the drama. His sonnets are to be found in a rather rare little volume, published anonymously, entitled *Sixty-five Sonnets: with Prefatory remarks on the Sonnet* (1818).

Nos. lxvii.-lxxi. EDWARD DOWDEN. Professor Dowden, widely known as an able critic and Shakespearian student, has not perhaps a very wide audience for his poetry. It is at any rate select; and it is with pleasure that I print these fine sonnets from his charming volume of *Poems*. Professor Dowden's recently published "Life of Shelley" has become the standard biography of that poet.

- No. lxxii. JOHN CHARLES EARLE. *The Master's Field*—from which the sonnet is taken—is the only volume by Mr. Earle with which I am acquainted. It is not, I understand, his best book; but rather *One Hundred Sonnets*, or else *From Light to Light*.
- No. lxxiii. EBENEZER ELLIOT (1781-1849). The "Corn-Law Rhymer" does not rank high among sonneteers. He was one of the most convinced opponents of the legitimate or Petrarchan sonnet, and a strong advocate for the Spenserian.
- No. lxxiv. JOSEPH ELLIS. From *Cæsar in Egypt: and other Poems*. By Joseph Ellis. 2nd Edition (Stewart & Co., Farringdon Street. 1882).
- Nos. lxxv.-lxxvii. HENRY ELLISON. In 1833 there were published at Malta two eccentrically worded and still more eccentrically printed volumes of verse, entitled *Madmoments, or First Verse-attempts by a Bornnatural*. To this strange heading was appended the following: "Addressed respectfully to the lightheaded of society at large; but intended more particularly for the use of that world's madhouse, London. By Henry Ellison, of Christchurch, Oxford." But the poems in these two volumes are very far from being incoherent or inartistically *outrés*. The printing and general arrangement are so out of the common that a certain artificial air of strangeness does certainly seem to characterise the poems; but the strangeness is only superficial. I have seen but one copy of this now scarce book—that in the British Museum Library, to which my attention was called by Dr. Garnett. Some years later the same author published his *Touches on the Harp of Nature*, and in 1884, *Poems of Real Life*—the last-named containing many of the sonnets which appeared in *Madmoments*. Perhaps no writer of genuine capacity has ever written so much or lived so long and attracted so little attention. I am glad to be able to give these three very fairly representative sonnets. Other fine examples will be found in Mr. Main's *CCC. English Sonnets*.
- Nos. lxxviii.-ix. FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER (1814-1863). These two sonnets from *The Cherwell Water Lily; and other Poems*, 1840, adequately represent Father Faber's position as a sonnet-writer. Personally, I cannot but consider that his poetry has been over-praised, though undoubtedly some of his sonnets have both strength and beauty.
- No. lxxviii. is the third of the series styled *On the Four Religious Heathens*, the other three being *Herodotus*, *Nicias*, and *Seneca*. It was Father Faber whom Wordsworth accredited with the possession of as true an eye to nature as he himself owned: "I have hardly ever known any one but myself who had a true eye for nature" [how eminently Wordsworthian!]; "one that thoroughly understood her meanings and her teaching—except,"

here he interrupted himself, says the narrator—(Aubrey de Vere, in his *Recollections*)—"one person. There was a young clergyman called Frederick Faber, who resided at Ambleside. He had not only as good an eye for nature as I have, but even a better one, and sometimes pointed out to me on the mountains effects which, with all my great experience, I had never detected."

No. lxxx. HON. JULIAN FANE (1827-1870). The story of this brilliantly gifted writer has been adequately and most sympathetically narrated by his biographer, Lord Lytton. His keen delight in Shakespeare's sonnets induced his acceptance of them as his standard in composition. To his mother, for whom he had a reverent love very beautiful in its tenderness and pride, he was wont to address a sonnet on each successive birthday; and it is one of those birthday-greetings which I have selected. For a pathetic account of the composition of his latest sonnets see *Julian Fane: A Memoir*. By Lord Lytton. 1871.

No. lxxxi. WILLIAM FREELAND. Mr. Freeland has found time in the midst of a long and active journalistic career to devote himself ever and again to the production of poetry. I am glad to have this opportunity of drawing attention to his *Birth Song; and other Poems*, 1882, and also to his contributions to the recently-issued volume of *The Glasgow Ballad Club*. Both books are published by Messrs. Maclehoose, of Glasgow. The following is irregular in structure, but otherwise excellent; it is the second of two entitled "The New-Comers:"—

What spirit is this that cometh from afar,
Making the household tender with a cry
That blends the mystery of earth and sky—
The blind mute motions of a new-lit star,
The unlanguage'd visions of a folded rose?
A marvel is the rose from bud to bloom,
The star a wonder and a splendour grows;
But this sweet babe, that neither sees nor knows,
Hath wrapt in it a genius and a doom
More visionful of beauty than all flowers,
More glowing wondrous than all singing spheres,
And though oft baffled by repelling powers,
Growing and towering through the stormy hours,
To perfect glory in God's year of years.

Nos. lxxxii.-lxxxiii. RICHARD GARNETT, LL.D. Mr. Garnett, a true poet and accomplished critic, and the leading English bibliographical authority living, has written few sonnets—but these few are good. The two I quote are sonnets of which Wordsworth or Rossetti might well have been proud to claim the authorship. The second is to be found in his pleasant volume, *Io in Egypt; and other Poems*. I append another excellent example:—

GARIBALDI'S RETIREMENT.

Not that three armies thou didst overthrow ;
 Not that three cities oped their gates to thee,
 I praise thee, chief ; not for *this* royalty
 Decked with new crowns, *that* utterly laid low ;
 For nothing of all thou didst forsake, to go
 And tend thy vines amid the Etrurian Sea ;
 Not even that thou didst *this*—though History
 Retreat two thousand selfish years to show
 Another Cincinnatus ! Rather for this,
 The having lived such life, that even this deed
 Of stress heroic natural seems as is
 Calm night, when glorious day it doth succeed ;
 And we, forewarned by surest auguries,
 The amazing act with no amazement read.

No. lxxxiv. MARY C. GILLINGTON. Miss Gillington has written and published some poetry of very considerable promise, for the most part as yet marked by a certain immaturity. A passion for the sea is manifest throughout her verse.

Nos. lxxxv.-vii. EDMUND W. GOSSE. Mr. Gosse's volumes of verse are entitled *On Viol and Flute* and *New Poems*, and he has recently published a new collection called *Firdausi in Exile: and other Poems*. Mr. Gosse has written several excellent sonnets, all characterised by refined grace.

No. lxxxvi. Mr. Waddington, referring to "Alcyone," speaks of it as the first sonnet in dialogue written in English ; but this is not quite the case, for William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, wrote one in this form about the beginning of the 17th century—and among others written in recent years I may refer to an interesting example by Mr. J. A. Symonds. I fancy also there is another early example, but cannot recollect the particulars. I print "Alcyone" more as an interesting exotic, and for its own indubitable beauty, than as a sonnet proper—for of course it is no more the latter than are those octosyllabic 14-line poems of which Mr. Waddington and Mr. Lefroy have given us some interesting examples, or than those 7-8 syllabled "sonnets" of which several good specimens are to be found in the French compilation, *Le Livre des Sonnets*. (Paris, 1875.)

No. lxxxvii. Compare with this the sonnet on *Æschylus* by Mr. Aubrey De Vere (*Search after Proserpine*, etc., p. 67):—

ÆSCHYLUS.

A sea-cliff carved into a bas-relief !
 Dark thoughts and sad, conceiv'd by brooding Nature ;
 Brought forth in storm :—dread shapes of Titan stature

Emblems of Fate, and Change, Revenge, and Grief,
 And Death, and Life ;—a caverned Hieroglyph
 Confronting still with thunder-blasted frieze
 All stress of years, and winds, and wasting seas :—
 The stranger nears it in his fragile skiff
 And hides his eyes. Few, few shall pass, great Bard,
 Thy dim sea-ports ! Entering, fewer yet
 Shall pierce thy mystic meanings, deep and hard ;
 But these shall owe to thee an endless debt ;
 The Eleusinian caverns they shall tread
 That wind beneath man's heart ; and wisdom learn with dread.

Nos. lxxxviii.-ix. DAVID GRAY (1838-1861). The sad story of this young Scotch poet is now familiar. (*Vide*, especially, the Cambridge edition of his poems, 1862, with the memoir by James Hedderwick and Prefatory Notice by the late Lord Houghton—and Mr. Robert Buchanan's *David Gray : and other Essays*.) The sonnets in *The Luggie : and other Poems*, entitled "In the Shadows," are full of delicate fancy and a somewhat morbid sensibility, with a keen note of pain from a bitterly disappointed heart. The sonnets, as sonnets, are generally unsatisfactory.

lxxxix. This sonnet, Mr. Buchanan tells us, was addressed by Gray to him. It has distinct poetic quality, but is at the same time a good example of its author's weakness. Tennyson is echoed in the first two lines, and Keats in the fifth.

No. xc. THOMAS GORDON HAKE. I am glad to be able to give this sonnet by one who has written so much and such original poetry as Dr. Hake has done. Dr. Hake has written few sonnets. No. xc. is not from any of his volumes of verse, but is taken from *The Academy*, where it appeared in April, 1884.

No. xci. ARTHUR HENRY HALLAM (1811-1883). Mr. Hallam deserves to be remembered for his own poetic utterances as well as because of his friendship with the present Laureate, and as having been the direct cause of *In Memoriam*, that most widely read of all English elegiac poems.

Nos. xcii.-xcv. EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON. Among the younger poets of our generation there is none who in the sonnet has surpassed Mr. Lee-Hamilton. This gentleman has published four volumes of verse, marked by curious inequalities along with striking dramatic force and high meditative faculty. His genius is measurely, not essentially lyrical :—in writing sonnets, his ear does not often fail him : in blank verse, or heroic couplets, only rarely ; but in purely lyrical and especially in ballad-writing, he is apt constantly to indulge in strangely dissonant lines. The four sonnets I have quoted are all fine ; "Sea-shell Murmurs" is especially noteworthy for its original treatment of a *motif* worn almost threadbare, it being an application not unworthy, indeed,

to rank along with the familiar corresponding passages in Landor and Wordsworth. The following, with its noble ethical lesson, in company with Nos. xciii., xciv., and xcv., is from *Apollo and Marsyas; and other Poems* (Elliot Stock, 1884), while "Sea-shell Murmurs" is from *The New Medusa; and other Poems* (Stock, 1882).

THE PHANTOM SHIP.

We touch Life's shore as swimmers from a wreck
 Who shudder at the cheerless land they reach,
 And find their comrades gathered on the beach
 Watching a fading sail, a small white speck—
 The Phantom ship, upon whose ample deck
 There seemed awhile a homeward place for each;
 The crowd still wring their hands and still beseech,
 But see, it fades, in spite of prayer and beck.
 Let those who hope for brighter shores no more
 Not mourn, but turning inland, bravely seek
 What hidden wealth redeems the shapeless shore.
 The strong must build stout cabins for the weak;
 Must plan and stint; must sow and reap and store;
 For grain takes root though all seems bare and bleak.

Nos. xcvi.-xcvii. SIR WILLIAM ROWAN HAMILTON (1805-1865).

As man, philosopher, and poet, Sir W. R. Hamilton was distinctively deserving of sincerest admiration. I know no pleasanter biographical volumes than those in which the Rev. R. Percival Graves has so efficiently acted the parts of writer and editor. These two noble sonnets can be matched by others almost equally fine, though the late Astronomer-Royal of Ireland was far from being a voluminous writer, especially in verse. He was essentially a keenly-intellectual spiritually-minded man. In a letter from Mr. Aubrey de Vere to myself that gentleman writes: "Sir R. Hamilton's sonnets are indeed, as you remark, excellent, and I rejoice that you are making them better known than they have been hitherto. Wordsworth once remarked to me that he had known many men of high talents and several of real genius: but that Coleridge and Sir W. R. Hamilton were the only men he had met to whom he would apply the term *wonderful*." Sir W. R. Hamilton, it may be new to many readers to learn, is among the finest prose writers of this century: I may quote the following passage from his introductory address on Astronomy, shortly after his election to the chair, at Dublin University (1831):—

"But not more surely" (do I believe), "than that to the dwellers in the moon—if such there be—the sun habitually appears and habitually withdraws during such alternate intervals as we call fortnightly here: not sending to announce his approach those herald clouds of rosy hues which on earth appear before him, nor rising red himself after the gradual light of dawn, but springing

forth at once from the bosom of night with more keen clear golden lustre than that which at mid-noon he sheds on the summit of some awful Alp ; nor throned, as with us at evening, in many-coloured pavilion of cloud, nor followed by twilight's solemn hour : but keeping his meridian lustre to the last, and vanishing into sudden darkness."

For all particulars concerning the Life and Labours of Sir W. R. Hamilton, the reader should consult the two volumes (a mine of literary interest) by the Rev. R. Percival Graves (Dublin University Press Series, and Longman & Co., 1882).

- NOS. xcvi. xcix. LORD HANMER. Forty-five years ago Lord Hanmer, then Sir John Hanmer, Bart., published a thin quarto volume of sonnets. Few in number, there was not a poor one in the selection : all were excellent, and several exceptionally fine. Sonnets like "The Fiumara," or "The Old Fisher," remain with one, as sometimes do circumstances of little import, touched for the moment into some unforgettable beauty. There is a suggestion of that sad northern painter, Josef Israels, in "The Old Fisher"—a pathos distinct from the more sombre, but humanly indifferent solemnity of most north Italian transcripts.

Thou art a fisher of Mazorbo ; lone,
 Drifting a usual shadow o'er the sea
 With thine old boat, that like a barkless tree
 Creaks in the wind, a pitchless dreary moan ;
 And there thy life and all thy thoughts have flown,
 Pouncing on crabs in shallows, till thy knee
 Crooked as theirs, now halts unsteadily,
 Going about to move the anchor stone ;
 And when the waves roll inward from the east,
 Takest thy net, and for some few sardines
 Toil'st, in the morning's wild and chilly ray :
 Then dost thou go to where yon bell-tower leans,
 And in the sunshine sit, the poor man's feast,
 Else abstinent in thy poverty, all the day.

- NO. c. REV. ROBERT STEPHEN HAWKER (1804-1875). No truer and probably no more eminent poet has been produced by Cornwall than the late Vicar of Morwenstow. His strength, however, does not lie in sonnets, though he wrote one or two excellent examples. His poetry, generally, is as fresh and bright as a sunny day on his own Cornish coasts.
- NO. ci. JOHN HOGBEN. Mr. Hogben has published little verse, and that only in magazines or weekly journals (*The Spectator*, etc.).
- NO. cii. EDMOND G. A. HOLMES. Mr. Holmes is the author of *Poems*, Series I. (H. S. King & Co., 1876), and *Poems*, Series II. (Kegan Paul, 1879). In both Series there are some strikingly

descriptive sonnets, especially those grouped under the titles, "Atlantic Sonnets" and "The Coast of Clare;" from the latter Series I may quote one:—

COAST OF CLARE.

Two walls of precipices black and steep,
 The storm-lashed ramparts of a naked land,
 Are parted here by leagues of lonely sand
 That make a bay; and up it ever creep
 Billowy ocean ripples half asleep,
 That cast a belt of foam along the strand,
 Seething and white, and wake in cadence grand
 The everlasting thunder of the deep.
 And there is never silence on that shore—
 Alike in storm and calm foam-fringes gird
 Its desolation, and the Atlantic's roar
 Makes mighty music. Though the sea be stirred
 By scarce a breath of breeze, yet evermore
 The sands are whitened, and the thunder heard.

Nos. ciii.-iv. THOMAS HOOD (1798-1845). These beautiful sonnets prove what an essentially true poet Hood was. His great fame as a humorist has overshadowed his claims to a high place among imaginative writers. How few of his contemporaries could have written that weird and impressive poem, "The Haunted House;" certainly none could have surpassed it. The sonnet on "Silence" here given is exceedingly beautiful, and should be compared with the following well-known sonnet by Edgar Poe:—

SILENCE.

There are some qualities, some incorporate things,
 That have a double life, which thus is made
 A type of that twin entity which springs
 From matter and light evinced in solid and shade.
 There is a two-fold Silence—sea and shore—
 Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places,
 Newly with grass o'ergrown; some solemn graces,
 Some human memories and tearful lore
 Render him terrorless; his name's "No More,"
 He is the corporate Silence; dread him not!
 No power hath he of evil in himself;
 But should some urgent fate (untimely lot)
 Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf,
 That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod
 No foot of man), commend thyself to God!

RICHARD HENGIST HORNE (1803-1884). The late R. Hengist Horne passed away in a very faint adumbration of that high reputation he once enjoyed. From the early days of "the farthing Epic"—

Orion—to the publication of the *Bible Tragedies*, is changes! No poet of this generation more lived his life than did "Orion:" he seems to have dwelt in, or at any rate visited all the habitable (and several of the uninhabitable) parts of the globe. Among his friends he numbered most of the leading poets and writers of this century, and among his constant correspondents was the late Mrs. Browning. He had an eminently fine presence, though when I last saw him he was manifestly yielding under the assaults of age and prolonged activity. Of all his works, personally I consider the best to be *Cosmo de Medici: and other Poems*. Among the short poems is one called, if I remember aright, "The Slave," which, for glowing richness of colouring, seems to me to hold a very high place in modern verse. Horne was not a sonnet-writer: the following, with all its faults, is, so far as I know, the only sonnet by him deserving the name. It was written on December 26, 1879, and was inscribed to the same Mr. Ellis whose sonnet "Silence" I have quoted on page 74.

THE FRIEND OF FRIENDS.

(Inscribed to Joseph Ellis, author of "*Cæsar in Egypt*.")

Who is the Friend of Friends?—not one who smiles
While you are prosperous,—purse-full, in fair fame,
Flattering, "Come, be my household's altar-flame,"
When knowing you can bask on sunny isles:
Not one who sayeth, "That brain's a mighty mould,"
With base-coin'd hints about alloys in gold:
Nor he who frankly tells you all your faults,
But drops all merit into vampire vaults:—
No: the true friend stands close 'midst circling storms,
When you are poor,—lost,—wrestling thro' a cloud;
With whom your ship rides high in freezing calms,
Its banner, ghostly pale, to him still proud;
Whose heart's Blest-Arab-spice dead hope embalms,
The same, tho' you sate throned,—or waiting for your shroud.

No. cv. CHARLES A. HOUFFE. A young writer, who, if he will eschew the crudities manifest in the little volume he recently published anonymously, will probably do good work. The sonnet quoted has the stamp of genuine poetry.

No. cvi. LORD HOUGHTON (18—1885). The late Lord Houghton had from his early youth close connection with literature, few names having been more familiar in the literary circles of the last generation or two than that of "Monckton Milnes." His poetry is more graceful, refined, and scholarly, than imaginative or strongly emotional.

Nos. cvii.-viii. LEIGH HUNT (1784-1859). We owe Leigh Hunt's splendid Nile sonnet to a friendly competition between himself

and two still greater poets, Keats and Shelley. It is strange that a *motif* so eminently suited to the highest poetic genius should have been treated in inverse ratio to the intellectual and poetic powers of the competitors, for undoubtedly Hunt's ranks first, Keats's second, and Shelley's last. I append, for comparison, the rival sonnets.

Month after month the gathering rains descend,
 Drenching yon secret Ethiopian dells,
 And from the desert's ice-girt pinnacles
 Where frost and heat in strange embraces blend
 On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.
 Girt there with blasts and meteors Tempest dwells
 By Nile's aerial urn ; with rapid spells
 Urging those waters to their mighty end.
 O'er Egypt's land of memory floods are level
 And they are thine, O Nile—and well thou knowest
 That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil
 And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.
 Beware, O Man—for knowledge must to thee
 Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

Son of the old moon-mountains African !
 Stream of the Pyramid and Crocodile !
 We call thee fruitful, and that very while
 A desert fills our seeing's inward span :
 Nurse of swart nations since the world began,
 Art thou so fruitful ? or dost thou beguile
 Those men to honour thee, who, worn with toil,
 Rest them a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan ?
 O may dark fancies err ? They surely do :
 'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
 Of all beyond itself. Thou dost bedew
 Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste
 The pleasant sun-rise. Green isles hast thou too,
 And to the sea as happily doth haste.

—JOHN KEATS.

Strangely, it is also to a friendly competition that is due the composition of "The Grasshopper and Cricket." Mr. Cowden Clarke has told us in his *Recollections*, how, on December 30, 1816, he accompanied Keats on a visit to Leigh Hunt at the latter's cottage in the Vale of Health, Hampstead Heath, and how Hunt challenged Keats to write "then, there, and to time," a sonnet "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket." Keats gained the victory over his rival in point of time. Both are eminently characteristic, the one unmistakably by the author of *Endymion*, the

other suffused with the genial sunshine pervading the temperament and the poetry of its writer. Here is Keats's:—

The poetry of earth is never dead :
 When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
 And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
 From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead :
 That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
 In summer luxury,—he has never done
 With his delights ; for when tired out with fun,
 He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
 The poetry of earth is ceasing never :
 On a lone winter evening, when the frost
 Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
 The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
 And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
 The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

No. cix. J. W. INCHBOLD. Mr. Inchbold has made the "sonnet" a special study, and has himself written many pleasant examples in a little volume entitled *Annus Amoris*, published in 1876 (H. S. King & Co.).

No. cx. JEAN INGELow. This sonnet is from Miss Ingelow's *Collected Poems*, so widely popular.

No. cxi. EBENEZER JONES (1820-1860). This author wrote no more than two or three sonnets.

Nos. cxii.-cxvii. JOHN KEATS (1795-1821). Keats wrote fifty sonnets (or rather fifty-one, including that recently brought to the notice of Mr. Sydney Colvin), but only a little over a third of these rank as really fine. Every one who knows Keats's poems is thoroughly familiar with the famous sonnet, "On first looking into Chapman's *Homer*." A special interest attaches to No. cxvii. It was Keats's last sonnet—indeed, his latest poem. On that last journey of his, when the vessel that was conveying him to Italy was beating about in the British Channel, he and his loyal friend Joseph Severn managed to land for a few hours on the coast of Devon. From the depth of weariness, bodily and spiritual, Keats rallied marvelously under the effects of the welcome change, and on his return to the ship he took up a volume of Shakespeare's *Poems*, and wrote in it this sonnet beginning "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art," returning the volume to Severn, to whom he had presented it a few days previously. It is among the most pathetic "last words" of poets. There is an alternative reading of the last line—

"And so live ever, or else swoon to death,"

but this lection is indubitably inferior.

No. cxviii. FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE. Mrs. Butler, more widely known by her familiar maiden name, is a genuine poet. Some of her sonnets—several of them very beautiful—are more satisfactory in structure than this one, but none surpasses it in dignity and solemn pathos.

CHARLES LAMB (1775-1834). An undue place has frequently of late been claimed for Lamb as a poet. That he had a keenly poetic nature is certain, but this premiss is not enough for the deduction referred to. Mr. Main gives four of his sonnets in his *Treasury*, of which "Work" and "Leisure" are simply eminently characteristic of the man, and the other two pleasant poems. Mr. Caine gives "Work" and another ("A Timid Grace," etc.), whose chief interest lies in its evident relation to that well-loved sister who is one of the most pathetic figures in the history of literature. The following sonnet on "Innocence" is one that Lamb himself considered his best :—

We were two pretty babes ; the youngest she,
The youngest and the loveliest far (I ween)
And INNOCENCE her name ; the time has been
We two did love each other's company ;
Time was, we two had wept to have been apart,
But when, by show of seeming good beguil'd,
I left the garb and manners of a child,
And my first love, for man's society,
Defiling with the world my virgin heart—
My lov'd companion dropt a tear and fled,
And hid in deepest shades her awful head.
Beloved ! who shall tell me where thou art,
In what delicious Eden to be found ?
That I may seek thee the wide world around.

Nos. cxx.-cxxi. ANDREW LANG. Mr. Andrew Lang has unmistakably "made his mark" in contemporary English poetry, though not by his sonnets, for these could be numbered on the fingers. What he *has* done in this direction has been exceptionally good. I can at the moment call to remembrance no two lines more rich in vowel-music than those in the octave of cxx.—

"The bones of Agamemnon are a show,
And ruined is his royal monument."

The striking sonnet on the death of Colonel Burnaby has not appeared heretofore in any volume ; it was published some time ago in the columns of *Punch*. Another of Mr. Lang's best sonnets I have not included in the body of this collection, simply because it has so often been reprinted that all sonnet-lovers know it well already ; but for those who may not have met with it heretofore I now print it :—

THE ODYSSEY.

As one that for a weary space has lain
 Lulled by the song of Circe and her wine
 In gardens near the pale of Proserpine,
 Where that Ægean isle forgets the main,
 And only the low lutes of love complain,
 And only shadows of wan lovers pine,
 As such an one were glad to know the brine
 Salt on his lips, and the large air again,
 So gladly, from the songs of modern speech
 Men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free
 Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,
 And through the music of the languid hours,
 They hear like ocean on a western beach
 The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

Nos. cxxii.-cxxv. EDWARD CRACROFT LEFROY. It is with pleasure that I draw attention to these four sonnets, very fairly representative of the sonnet-work of the Rev. E. C. Lefroy. To Mr. Andrew Lang I am indebted for having brought Mr. Lefroy's work to my notice. This gentleman, whom delicate health has prevented pursuing further the clerical profession, may be considered the living poetical brother of Hartley Coleridge and Mr. Charles Tennyson-Turner: to the work of the latter his sonnets bear an especial affinity. They are simple in language, genuine in feeling, and poetic in expression, but they do not invariably fulfil the technical requirements of the legitimate sonnet. Of one thing it seems to me Mr. Lefroy has need to beware—that he does not lapse into the fatal Wordsworthian habit of rhyming upon everything he sees or thinks of: as yet his bark is sailing safely enough in that disastrous neighbourhood, but once caught in the current—and there is an end of “pure gems of white-heat thought carved delicately!” Mr. Lefroy in the first instance published his sonnets in four little pamphlets, variously priced at 3d. and 1s. each: they are separately entitled *Echoes from Theocritus*, *Cytisus and Galingale*, *Windows of the Church*, and *Sketches and Studies*. In 1885 he published, through Mr. Elliot Stock, a hundred sonnets under the title *Echoes from Theocritus; and other Sonnets*, being those of the foregoing pamphlets with some pruning and re-arrangement. It is a volume that no lover of sonnet literature should be without. The four which I have printed are all from the larger section of this volume (*Miscellaneous Sonnets*), so I may quote two from the series of *Echoes from Theocritus*:—

CLEONICUS.

(Epi^gram IX.)

Let sailors watch the waning Pleiades,
 And keep the shore. This man, made over-bold
 By Godless pride, and too much greed of gold,

Setting his gains before his health and ease,
 Ran up his sails to catch the whistling breeze :
 Whose corpse, ere now, the restless waves have rolled
 From deep to deep, while all his freight, unsold,
 Is tossed upon the tumult of the seas.
 Such fate had one whose avaricious eyes
 Lured him to peril in a mad emprise.
 Yea, from the Syrian coast to Thesos bound,
 He slipped his anchor with rich merchandise,
 While the wet stars were slipping from the skies,
 And with the drowning stars untimely drowned.

A SICILIAN NIGHT.

Come, stand we here within this cactus-brake,
 And let the leafy tangle cloak us round.
 It is the spot whereof the Seer spake—
 To nymph and faun a nightly trysting-ground.
 How still the scene! No zephyr stirs to shake
 The listening air. The trees are slumber-bound
 In soft repose. There's not a bird awake
 To witch the silence with a silver sound.
 Now haply shall the vision trance our eyes,
 By heedless mortals all too rarely scanned,
 Of mystic maidens in immortal guise,
 Who mingle shadowy hand with shadowy hand,
 And moving o'er the lilies circle-wise,
 Beat out with naked feet a saraband.

No. cxxvi. **FREDERICK LOCKER.** Mr. Locker's *London Lyrics* has been one of the most successful volumes of verse by any contemporary poet.

No. cxxvii. **EARL OF LYTTON.** Lord Lytton has written very few sonnets. This and the one on "Public Opinion" are probably the two best.

DAVID M. MAIN. Mr. Main, whose name is so familiar to every student of sonnet literature, is not only able to judge, but to write a sonnet himself. The two following have heretofore appeared, though not in any anthology :—

TO CHAUCER.

Chaucer ! when in my breast, as autumn wanes,
 Sweet Hope begins to droop—fair flower that grew
 With the glad prime, and bloomed the summer through—
 Thou art my chiefest solace. It sustains
 My faltering faith, which coming fogs and rains
 Might e'se to their dull element subdue,
 That the rude season's spite can ne'er undo

The spring perennial that in thee remains.
 Nor need I stir beyond the cricket's chime
 Here in this ingle-nook—the cuckoo's cry
 Hushed on the hill-side—meadows all forlorn—
 To breathe the freshness of an April morn
 Mated with thee, thy cheerful minstrelsy
 Feeding the vernal heart through winter's clime.

TO A FAVOURITE EVENING RETREAT, NEAR GLASGOW.

O loved wild hill-side, that hast been a power
 Not less than books, greater than preacher's art,
 To heal my wounded spirit, and my heart
 Retune to gentle thoughts, that hour on hour
 Must languish in the city, like a flower
 In wayside dust, while on the vulgar mart
 We squander for scant gold our better part
 From morn till eve, in frost, and sun, and shower !
 My soul breaks into singing as I haste,
 Day's labour ended, towards thy sylvan shrine
 Of rustling beech, hawthorn, and eglantine ;
 And, wandering in thy shade, I dream of thee
 As of green pastures 'mid the desert waste,
 Wells of sweet water in the bitter sea.

Nos. cxxviii.-cxxxiii. PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON. It is now some nine years ago since one winter evening, sitting with him before his studio fire, Rossetti asked me if I knew Philip Marston's poems. It so happened that I did, at which Rossetti seemed greatly pleased, adding, "I consider him beyond all question the strongest among our minor bards : and as for his sonnets, they are nearly always excellent, and very often in the highest degree admirable. I have the most genuine admiration for him, both as man and poet." Subsequently more thorough familiarity with Mr. Marston's poetry has left upon me an abiding impression of a true poetic genius exercising itself within circumscribed limits. Mr. Marston's chief drawback—from the point of view of the general reader—is monotony of theme, though in his latest volume he has done much to obviate this objection. This, and his undoubted overshadowing by the genius of the greatest sonnet-writer of our day, are probably the reasons for his comparatively restricted reputation. Curiously enough, Mr. Marston is much better known and more widely read in America than here ; indeed, he is undoubtedly the most popular of all our younger men over-sea. Throughout all his poetry—for the most part very beautiful—there is exquisite sensitiveness to the delicate hues and gradations of colour in sky and on earth, all the more noteworthy from the fact of the author's misfortune of blindness. Had it not been for this "indifferent cruelty of cruel fate," he would almost certainly have gained a far wider reputation than has been his lot to obtain.

Mr. Marston died in February last (1887). No student of contemporary poetry should omit perusal of his three volumes, *Song-Tide*, *All in All*, and *Wind-Voices*, a comprehensive selection from which will appear in one of the *Canterbury Poets* series early in 1888.

Nos. cxxxiv.-cxxxv. WESTLAND MARSTON, LL.D. Many years have elapsed since *The Patrician's Daughter*, *Strathmore*, and other fine plays from the same hand were widely popular. But if the dramatic work of Dr. Marston is now seldom seen represented on the stage, that pure and wholesome writer has still a considerable chamber audience. His plays are the work not only of a man of the world, but of a poet and a philosopher, the latter in its true sense. He can best be read, now, in the *Selected Dramatic Work and Poems*, published a year or two ago in two vols., by Messrs. Chatto & Windus.

FRANK T. MARZIALS. I regret that I became acquainted with Mr. Marzials' sonnets too late to include an example in the body of this book. I am pleased, however, to be able to quote one here :—

THE LAST METAMORPHOSIS OF MEPHISTOPHELES.

Candid he is, and courteous therewithal,—
Nor, as he once was wont, in the far prime,
Flashes his scorn to heaven ;—nor as the mime
Of after-days, with antic bestial
Convenes the ape in man to carnival ;—
Nor as the cynic of a later time
Jeers, that his laughter, like a jangled chime,
Rings through the abyss of our eternal fall.

But now, in courtliest tones of cultured grace,
He glories in the growth of good, his glance
Beaming benignant as he bids us trace
Good everywhere—till, as mere motes that dance
Athwart the sunbeams, all things evil and base
Glint golden in his genial tolerance.

No. cxxxvi. GEORGE MEREDITH. Mr. Meredith's fame—a steadily and rapidly increasing fame—as the most brilliant living master of fiction, has overshadowed his claims as a poet. Out of the hundreds who have read and delighted in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, in *Evan Harrington*, in *Rhoda Fleming*, etc., there are probably only two or three here and there who before the recent issue of *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* knew that Mr. Meredith had written verse at all. Yet two very noteworthy little volumes had previously—the first a long time before—seen the light. In the second, entitled *Modern Love: and other Poems*, there is a very remarkable sequence of sixteen-line poems comprised under the heading *Modern Love*. A sad enough story

is told therein, with great skill, and much poetic beauty. I had always imagined them to have been sonnets on the model of the Italian "sonnet with a tail," but Mr. Meredith tells me that they were not designed for that form. As, however, for all their structural drawbacks they are in other things essentially "caudated sonnets," I may quote the following fine examples:—

MODERN LOVE.

XVI.

In our old shipwreck'd days there was an hour
When in the firelight steadily aglow,
Join'd slackly, we beheld the chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us: and hush'd we sat
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing:
The nodding elders mix'd good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life's greatest pleasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk. "Ah, yes!
Love dies!" I said: I never thought it less.
She yearn'd to me that sentence to unsay:
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was soft against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her heart did lift:
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound!

XXIX.

Am I failing? for no longer can I cast
A glory round about this head of gold.
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould—
Not like the consecration of the Past!
Is my soul beggar'd? Something more than earth
I cry for still: I cannot be at peace
In having Love upon a mortal lease.
I cannot take the woman at her worth!
Where is the ancient wreath wherewith I clothed
Our human nakedness, and could endow
With spiritual splendour a white brow
That else had grinned at me the fact I loath'd?
A kiss is but a kiss now! and no wave
Of a great flood that whirls me to the sea.
But, as you will! we'll sit contentedly,
And eat our pot of honey on the grave.

XLIII.

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-back'd wave!
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,

And dart their hissing tongues far up the sand ;
 In hearing of the ocean, and in sight
 Of those ribb'd wind-streaks running into white.
 If I the death of love had deeply plann'd,
 I never could have made it half so sure,
 As by the unblest'd kisses which upbraid
 The full-waked sense ; or, failing that, degrade !
 'Tis morning : but no morning can restore
 What we have forfeited. I see no sin :
 The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
 No villain need be ! Passions spin the plot ;
 We are betray'd by what is false within.

XLIX.

He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,
 Nor any wicked change in her discern'd ;
 And she believed his old love had return'd ;
 Which was her exultation and her scourge.
 She took his hand, and walked with him, and seem'd
 The wife he sought, tho' shadowlike and dry.
 She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,
 And tell her loudly she no longer dream'd.
 She dared not say, " This is my breast, look in."
 But there's a strength to help the desperate weak.
 That night he learned how silence best can speak
 The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.
 About the middle of the night her call
 Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.
 " Now kiss me, dear ! it may be now ! " she said.
 Lethe had pass'd those lips, and he knew all.

L.

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat :
 The union of this ever diverse pair !
 These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
 Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
 Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
 They wandered once ; clear as the dew on flowers ;
 But they fed not on the advancing hours ;
 Their hearts held craving for the buried day.
 Then each applied to each the fatal knife,
 Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
 Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
 When hot for certainties in this our life !
 In tragic hints here see what evermore
 Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
 Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
 To throw that faint thin line upon the shore !

As to the single sonnet proper by Mr. Meredith which I have given in my selection, it is quite unnecessary to point to its imaginative power—its sense of vastness. It is from his *Poems and Lyrics of the Foy of Earth*.

- Nos. cxxxvii.-ix. ALICE MEYNELL. Mrs. Meynell, notwithstanding that she has only published one slight volume of verse, is generally acknowledged to be one of the sweetest singers among living poets. With the exception of "Renouncement" her sonnets are to be found in her volume, *Preludes*, illustrated by her sister, Mrs. Butler (Elizabeth Thompson): several of them show a very marked affinity to the love sonnets of Mrs. Browning. In this class I know no nobler or more beautiful sonnet than "Renouncement," and I have so considered it ever since the day I first heard it, when Rossetti (who knew it by heart), repeating it to me, added that it was one of the three finest sonnets ever written by woman. I add here another sonnet from *Preludes*:—

A DAY TO COME.

Your own fair youth, you care so little for it,
Smiling towards Heaven, you would not stay the advances
Of time and change upon your happiest fancies.
I keep your golden hour and will restore it.
If ever, in time to come, you would explore it—
Your old self whose thoughts went like last year's pansies,
Look unto me : no mirror keeps its glances ;
In my unfailing praises now I store it.
To keep all joys of yours from Time's estranging,
I shall be then a treasury where your gay
Happy and pensive past for ever is.
I shall be then a garden charmed from changing,
In which your June has never passed away.
Walk there awhile among my memories.

- No. cxi. COSMO MONKHOUSE. Mr. Monkhouse is the author of a volume of verse entitled *A Dream of Idleness: and other Poems*. Mr. Monkhouse has made a reputation for careful critical knowledge and sympathetic insight, both in art and poetic literature.

- Nos. cxli.-cxlii. ERNEST MYERS. Mr. Myers has published *Poems; The Defence of Rome and other Poems*, and recently a volume, which I have not seen, entitled *The Judgment of Prometheus: and other Poems*. There is, in the sonnets I have selected, a breadth which is specially noteworthy. No. cxliii. was prefixed by Mr. Mark Pattison to his "Parchment" edition of Milton's sonnets. Other fine sonnets by Mr. Myers are those on Pindar and Darwin, and that on Achilles, prefixed to the joint translation of the Iliad.

Nos. cxliv.-cxlvi. FREDERICK W. H. MYERS. Mr. Frederick Myers is known as one of the most accomplished and fervid of living critics : his *Essays* are pleasant reading, combining polished elegance of style with wide knowledge and sympathetic insight. In 1882 he published a volume of tender and high-toned verse, entitled *The Renewal of Youth : and other Poems* ; and it is from this volume Nos. cxlv. and cxlvi. are excerpted.

No. cxlvii. E. NESBIT. From *Lays and Legends*, 1886, a volume of verse by a new writer of exceptional promise.

No. cxlviii. CARDINAL NEWMAN. All students of contemporary literature know what a master of prose is the celebrated author of the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. That he is a poet as well is realised by all who have read his earnest and polished verse.

Nos. cxlix., cl. JOHN NICHOL, LL.D., etc. Professor Nichol, the distinguished son of a distinguished father, holds a high place in contemporary letters. Fortunate in obtaining at an early age the Regius Professorship of English Literature in Glasgow University, he was unfortunate in so far that his new labours entailed withdrawal from the highly cultivated sphere in which he was so well fitted to move, and also prevented his devoting himself as ardently to creative work as he would otherwise have done. His critical works, however, including his recent admirable *American Literature*, have won for him a deservedly high place. But here we are concerned with him as a poet. His classic drama, *Hannibal*, had an immediate and, as is now proved, no ephemeral success ; and his reputation has further gained by *The Death of Themistocles : and other Poems*. In these volumes Professor Nichol owes nothing to any contemporary. He belongs to no school of poetry, save to that Catholic school which would have each man do his work in the way most natural to him, and do it well. As a sonnet-writer, however, he is not at his best.

Nos. cli.-clii. J. ASHCROFT NOBLE. Mr. Ashcroft Noble is the author of *The Pelican Papers : Reminiscences and Remains of a Dweller in the Wilderness* (1873). An accomplished literary critic, he has also written some fine verse. He, moreover, some two or three years ago wrote the article in the *Contemporary Review* on the sonnet to which I have already referred in the Introductory Essay.

No. cliii. EDWARD H. NOEL (18— - 1884). The late Mr. Edward Noel was one of those men who impress one more by their personality than by anything written. He was a man of true and liberal culture, with a temperament at once romantic and reserved, and with a nature so essentially noble and beautiful that no one could know him without gaining greatly thereby. His memory is a treasured possession with the fortunate few who had his friendship. Until after his death, few, if any, of his friends knew that he had

written anything, though a year or two previous he did let fall some hint to me of his poetic work. After his death, Miss Noel published (Elliot Stock, 1884) his collected *Poems*. They are characterised by deep meditative beauty—not underivative as regards expression, it is true—and a sad yet not despairing melancholy, the result of the great loss Mr Noel sustained in the death of his dearly loved wife, which occurred during his long residence in Greece.

No. cliv. HON. RODEN NOEL. The Hon. Roden Noel has made a wide reputation as a poet. He has, however, written few sonnets.

No. clv. FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE. Mr. Palgrave owes his reputation to his high critical faculty. His chief characteristic as a writer is refinement of taste, whether manifested in literature or in art. His *Golden Treasury of English Songs* and his *Children's Treasury of Lyrical Poetry* are charming compilations, as are his *Herrick* and *Shakespeare's Songs and Sonnets*. Quite recently he was elected to the Chair of Poetry at Oxford, vacant by the death of the late Principal Shairp. Some thirty years ago Mr. Palgrave published his *Idylls and Songs*, and in 1871 his *Lyrical Poems*. No. clv., however, is a hitherto unpublished sonnet: it was, as some will at once infer, written on the occasion of the tragic death of the author's late friend, Lord Frederick Cavendish.

No. clvi. SIR NOEL PATON, R.S.A., etc. It is many years since this celebrated artist published his second little volume of verse. Several of his sonnets are characterised by distinct grace of expression and poetic feeling, but the exceedingly fine one which I give seems to me the strongest. It was first printed in Mr. Hall Caine's *Anthology*, and is of much later date than any included in Sir Noel's two published volumes.

Nos. clvii.-clix. JOHN PAYNE. Mr. Payne has published *Intaglios*, *Lautrec*, *New Poems*, etc., and ranks high among the younger men. His sonnets have been much admired by many good judges.

Nos. clx.-clxiii. EMILY PFEIFFER. Mrs. Pfeiffer is among the most prolific of living poetesses. The fine sonnets I quote speak for themselves.

Nos. clxiv.-clxv. BRYAN WALLER PROCTER (1790-1874). Barry Cornwall is known chiefly as a song-writer, but he wrote some good sonnets.

Nos. clxvi.-clxvii. MARK ANDRÉ RAFFALOVICH. Mr. Raffalovich's sonnets are amongst the best of those by our younger writers that markedly derive from Shakespeare's. He has allowed himself to be even more strongly influenced by the latter than did Julian Fane; he has not, however, the intellectual strength or reserve

power of Mr. Wilfrid Blunt. He has published three highly interesting but unequal volumes of verse, the sonnets I have selected coming from the first, *Cyril and Lionel; and other Poems*.

HARDWICKE D. RAWNSLEY. My attention was drawn to the fine descriptive sonnets of Mr. Rawnsley, too late for the selection of one for appearance in the body of this book. I print one example here, excerpted from *Sonnets of the English Lakes* (Longmans).

THE LAKE MIRROR: IN AUTUMN.

We sailed from cape to cape, whose headlands grey
 Had blossomed branchy gold, and half in fear,
 Through liquid mirrors of the Autumn mere,
 We ventured in among the leafy sway
 Of watery woodland, and the russet spray
 Of fern and rosy briar, reflected clear,
 Still dancing by the prow as we drew near,
 To grow to stillness as we passed away.
 That day the glory of two worlds was ours,
 A depth and height of faint autumnal sky,
 A double pageant of the painted wood;
 Still, as we stole upon a summer-flood,
 Marbled by snow the mountain-tops close by
 Spoke from warm depths of Winter's nearing hours.

No. clxviii. ERNEST RHYS. Mr. Rhys is one of the latest recruits to the great army of literature. He has shown distinct literary judgment and capacity in his edition in the *Canterbury Poets* of Herbert, in his Introduction to a popular edition of the *Mort D'Arthur*, and in various magazine articles. Mr. Rhys is editor of the series of prose works, *The Camelot Classics*.

No. clxix. CHARLES ROBERTS, the author of *Orion: and other Poems*, and *In Divers Tones*, is Professor of English Literature in the University of King's College at Windsor, N.S., Canada. I am unaware if he be of Canadian birth, but he is indisputably foremost among the poets of Canada. The sonnet by which I have represented him is remarkable as an example of the capacity of the sonnet to convey within its narrow compass, harmoniously, a multiplicity of details. The following is fine as a poem (probably inspired by Millet's well-known drawing), and is interesting to sonnet-students on account of the heterodox rhyme-system of its octave. Both sonnets are from *In Divers Tones*.

THE SOWER.

A brown, sad-coloured hill-side, where the soil,
 Fresh from the frequent harrow, deep and fine,
 Lies bare; no break in the remote sky-line,
 Save where a flock of pigeons streams aloft,

Startled from feed in some low-lying croft,
 Or far-off spires with yellow of sunset shine ;
 And here the Sower, unwittingly divine,
 Exerts the silent forethought of his toil.

Alone he treads the glebe, his measured stride
 Dumb in the yielding soil ; and tho' small joy
 Dwell in his heavy face, as spreads the blind
 Pale grain from his dispensing palm aside,
 This plodding churl grows great in his employ ;—
 God-like, he makes provision for mankind.

No. clxx. ERIC SUTHERLAND ROBERTSON. Mr. Eric Robertson is another of those who have not published their poems in book-form. Several of his sonnets have appeared in magazines, and a fine one called "A Vision of Pain," in Mr. Caine's *Sonnets of Three Centuries*. His sonnets, such as I have seen, are characterised by originality of conception, and generally they answer to that searching test, adequacy of motive. Mr. Robertson's practical interest in educational questions, in addition to arduous though miscellaneous literary labours, have hitherto stood in the way of his taking the place among the younger writers to which his high capabilities entitle him. A few years ago he published an interesting and useful little volume entitled *English Poetesses*. In the autumn of 1886 he was appointed to the Chair of Literature and Philosophy at the University of the Punjab, Lahore. Professor Robertson is responsible for the scheme and General Editorship of the Series of Biographies entitled *Great Writers*.

Nos. clxxi.-clxxiii. A. MARY F. ROBINSON. There have been few instances of any young writer so rapidly coming into wide and strongly interested notice as that of Miss Mary Robinson. Her first little volume, *A Handful of Honeysuckle*, was plainly to a large extent derivative, but at the same time it showed so much native sweetness, so much delicacy of touch and occasional strength, that great things began to be prophesied of the young poetess. In due time appeared *The Crowned Hippolytus : and other Poems*, and Miss Robinson's position was confirmed, the volume exhibiting very marked increase of strength, though it was not without some markedly tentative efforts. Personally, I do not think this volume of verse has yet been done full justice to. In 1884 was published *The New Arcadia*, a book that deservedly attracted very considerable attention ; though some of Miss Robinson's most discriminating friends doubted the advisability of her attempting the reform of the condition of the agricultural classes by means of poetic special pleading. There are, unfortunately, too many examples of the ruin of poetic and artistic genius through the tendency (so rapidly growing into unconscious

or uncontrolled habit) to "preach." Since this anthology was first published, another volume of verse by Miss Robinson has appeared, under the title *An Italian Garden*. This writer has a keen eye for nature, has earnest sympathies and insight, and a very sweet and true lyric voice: if she will be but loyal to herself, she may yet take a very high place indeed. She has also written *Arden; A Romance*, and, among various biographical and historical studies, an admirable *Life of Emily Brontë* (*Eminent Women Series*). The sonnets I have selected are from her second volume of poems.

In the *New Arcadia* there are two fine sonnets entitled "Apprehension," which I have pleasure in quoting:—

I.

O foolish dream, to hope that such as I
 Who answer only to thine easiest moods,
 Should fill thy heart, as o'er my heart there broods
 The perfect fulness of thy memory!
 I flit across thy soul as white birds fly
 Across the untrodden desert solitudes:
 A moment's flash of wings; fair interludes
 That leave unchanged the eternal sand and sky.
 Even such to thee am I; but thou to me
 As the embracing shore to the sobbing sea,
 Even as the sea itself to the storm-tossed rill.
 But who, but who shall give such rest to thee?
 The deep mid-ocean waters perpetually
 Call to the land, and call unanswered still.

II.

As dreams the fasting nun of Paradise,
 And finds her gnawing hunger pass away
 In thinking of the happy bridal day
 That soon shall dawn upon her watching eyes,
 So, dreaming of your love, do I despise
 Harshness or death of friends, doubt, slow decay,
 Madness,—all dreads that fill me with dismay,
 And creep about me oft with fell surmise.
 For you are true: and all I hoped you are:
 O perfect answer to my calling heart!
 And very sweet my life is, having thee.
 Yet must I dread the dim end shrouded far;
 Yet must I dream: should once the good planks start,
 How bottomless yawns beneath the boiling sea!

Nos. clxxiv.-clxxvi. W. CALDWELL ROSCOE (1823-1859). If Mr. W. Caldwell Roscoe had lived a few years longer he would almost certainly have ensured for himself an abiding reputation as master

of the sonnet. The few examples he left behind him, published and unpublished, are mostly very beautiful, one or two quite exceptionally so. (Vide *Poems and Essays by the late William Caldwell Roscoe, Edited, with a Prefatory Memoir, by his Brother-in-Law, Richard Holt Hutton. 1860.*)

No. clxxvi. This truly exquisite sonnet, so fine in conception, so lovely in expression, and so pathetic in its significance, has one serious flaw. That a man so scholarly and with so sensitive an ear could be guilty of the barbarism of *Apollian* is extraordinary. As regards the sixth word of the fifth line, it may be noted that both in the versions of 1851 and 1860 it was printed "white." That it was "while" in the original is known from the fact that in the proof-sheet there is a marginal correction of it to "white." Mr. Main saw this proof-sheet, but concluded that the poet had made an unintentional slip. Both Mr. Main and Mr. Caine print "while," and this reading I have adopted also. "White" undoubtedly narrows the idea.

No. clxxv. This sonnet forms the epilogue to the fine tragedy *Violenzia* (1851), which is too little known.

No. clxxvii. W. STANLEY ROSCOE (1782-1843). From the *Poems* (1834). W. S. Roscoe, the son of the historian, was father of William Caldwell Roscoe.

Nos. clxxviii.-clxxxii. CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI. As I have already had occasion to remark, Miss Rossetti ranks foremost among living poetesses. She and she alone could write such magic lyrics as "Dream-Land." Her sonnets bear but a small proportion to her purely lyrical poems. Some were written at a very early age: they are all or mostly very sombre, but are as impressive as they are beautiful. I know of no other woman who has written sonnets like "The World," or "Vanity of Vanities." There is a very marked affinity between much of Miss Rossetti's work and that of her brother Gabriel.

Nos. clxxxiii.-cxciv. DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828-1882). It has taken time for the growth of widespread admiration of the sonnet-work of this most imaginative of all the Victorian poets. There are already not a few among the best judges who consider him the greatest sonneteer of our language, his sonnets having "the fundamental brain-work" of Shakespeare's, the beauty of Mrs. Browning's, the dignity and, occasionally, the sunlit transparency of Wordsworth's, with a more starling and impressive vehemence, a greater voluminousness of urgent music. But I need not repeat what I have already in substance said in the Introduction. Even in a limited selection his sonnets speak for themselves.

No. clxxxiii. This sonnet appears in the completed *House of Life* as "Soul's Beauty." It is specially suited to preface any selection of Rossetti's sonnets, from the eminently characteristic

lines of its sestet. The picture for which "Sybilla Palmifera" was written is a very noble design.

No. clxxxiv. This is not only the most beautiful of all its author's sonnets, but one of the most beautiful in the language. It was written when Rossetti was only twenty-one, and first appeared in that now very scarce publication, *The Germ*, in 1850. There is no doubt that the generally known version is the finer, but the original is also so beautiful (notwithstanding such rhymes as "widening" and "in") that I may give it here:—

Water, for anguish of the solstice,—yea
 Over the vessel's mouth still widening
 Listlessly dipt to let the water in
 With slow vague gurgle. Blue, and deep away
 The heat lies silent at the brink of day.
 Now the hand trails upon the viol-string,
 That sobs; and the brown faces cease to sing,
 Mournful with complete pleasure. Her eyes stray
 In distance; through her lips the pipe doth creep
 And leaves them pouting; the green shadowed grass
 Is cool against her naked flesh. Let be:
 Say nothing now unto her lest she weep,
 Nor name this ever. Be it as it was,—
 Life touching lips with Immortality.

There is no more noteworthy instance of Rossetti's delicate judgment in revision than the substitution in the eleventh line of *side* for *flesh*, the artistic gain in the later reading being unmistakable; he felt that the exquisiteness of the picture was disturbed by a word not beautiful in itself and vulgarised by usage in a special sense.

No. cxc. This sonnet is one of three grouped under the same title. What a magnificent suggestion of space—what a boundless horizon is opened up—in the six closing lines!

No. cxcii. The most terrible of sonnets in its spiritual significance.

I may quote the last sonnet of this series, certainly one of the most noble sonnet-sequences in existence.

THE ONE HOPE.

When vain desire at last and vain regret
 Go hand and hand to death, and all is vain,
 What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
 And teach the unforgetful to forget?
 Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet—
 Or may the soul at once in a green plain
 Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
 And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?

Ah ! when the wan soul in that golden air
 Between the scripted petals softly blown
 Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown—
 Ah ! let none other alien spell soe'er
 But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
 Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

- Nos. cxcv.-cxcvi. WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI. Mr. W. M. Rossetti, widely known as an accomplished critic, has published no volume of verse, although he has written a considerable quantity, especially in sonnet-form. "Democracy Downtrodden" is well known to all students of contemporary verse, and is generally acknowledged to be one of the finest Miltonic sonnets of our time.
- No. cxcvii. THOMAS RUSSELL (1762-1788.) The sonnet by this unfortunate young clergyman which was so greatly praised by Landor, Wordsworth, Bowles, and other authorities agreed in ranking it high, and this we may well do without endorsing Landor's statement—"A poem on Philoctetes by a Mr. Russell which would authorise him to join the shades of Sophocles and Euripides."
- Nos. cxcviii.-cciii. WILLIAM BELL SCOTT. This accomplished poet, artist, and critic is not so widely known in his first-named capacity as he ought to be. Among men of letters themselves he holds a high and honoured place. He presents a curious contrast to his brother, the late David Scott, that most imaginative of all the artists whom Scotland has produced, often, and not without some reason, called the Scottish Blake. Mr. W. Bell Scott's work is keenly intellectual, but it is also characterised by great simplicity of expression. His *Poems by a Painter*, his *Poems and Ballads and Studies from Nature*, and his *Harvest Home* are treasured possessions with those who know how to own good books. He has written many very striking sonnets, and in making a fairly representative selection I have been forced to omit several which I would gladly have inserted. The intellectual vision of such a sonnet as "The Universe Void," the meditative beauty of "The Old House," and the pathetic human note in "Parted Love" must appeal to every one.
- No. cciv. PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822). Shelley wrote even fewer sonnets than did Byron; but the few which Byron wrote he wrote well, and this cannot be said of Shelley. This imaginative and beautiful (though far from flawless) poem in fourteen lines is so divergent from all accepted rules that it can hardly be styled a sonnet. No writer now-a-days could venture to print a sonnet with such rhymes as *stone—frown, appear—despair*. As an imaginative poem it is, as is felt at once by every reader, very impressive. It is strange that Shelley, the most poetic of poets, should have been unable to write a good sonnet as a sonnet;

but probably the restrictions of the form pressed upon him with a special heaviness. Chopin, the Shelley of musical composers, wrote his beautiful mazurkas : looked at strictly as mazurkas they are unsatisfactory. In both instances, however, uncontrollable genius overbalanced propriety of form.

Mr. Main prints the famous *West Wind* lyric as five sonnets. That these stanzas are not sonnets, however, need hardly be explained to any one who knows them, and what a lyric is, and what a sonnet. It is true that they are divisible into five fourteen-line parts ; but the result of disintegration is only to present several hopelessly irregular sonnets, and to tend to dissipate the lyric emotion aroused by the very first words of Shelley's exquisite poem. Moreover, that Shelley himself had no such idea is evident from the fact that the line which would be the fourteenth of the fourth "sonnet" ends with a comma, which occurs in the middle of a sentence—

"Tameless, and swift, and proud,"

v.

"Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is."

Mr. J. A. Symonds has adequately defined the metrical structure of this famous lyric as "interrupted *terza rima*."

No. ccv. GEORGE AUGUSTUS SIMCOX. Mr. Simcox is the author of *Poems and Romances*.

No. ccvi. ALEXANDER SMITH (1830-1867). Alexander Smith is probably read by five where a quarter of a century ago he was read by a hundred. His *Life-Drama* is now eminently an upper-shelf book. He wrote few sonnets ; none very striking. No. ccvi. is his best, though too markedly derivative.

No. ccvii. ROBERT SOUTHEY (1794-1843). Southey wrote very few sonnets. He had not, in general, the gift of expressing himself concisely.

No. ccviii. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. This sonnet has not hitherto been printed, nor that which is quoted below ; and I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Stevenson for permission to publish them in this anthology, though they were not sent to me for that purpose.

THE ARABESQUE (COMPLAINT OF AN ARTIST).

I made a fresco on the coronal,
Amid the sounding silence and the void
Of life's wind-spent and unfrequented hall.
I drew the nothings that my soul enjoyed ;
The petty image of the enormous fact
I fled ; and when the sun soared over all

And threw a brightness on the painted tract,
 Lo, the vain lines were reading on the wall !
 In vain we think ; our life about us lies
 O'erscrawled with crooked writ ; we toil in vain
 To hear the hymn of ancient harmonies
 That quire upon the mountain or the plain ;
 And from the august silence of the skies
 Babble of speech returns to us again.

Nos. ccix.-ccx. CHARLES STRONG (1785-1864). From *Sonnets*, by the Rev. Charles Strong, 1835. An accomplished man and accomplished writer.

Nos. ccxi.-ccxv. ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. It might naturally have been expected that, like Shelley, Mr. Swinburne would not have proved himself a good sonnet-writer. His high and eminently lyrical genius, however, has not prevented his achieving success in this form. No. ccxi. is the fine dedicatory sonnet to Mr. Theodore Watts, prefixed to *Tristram in Lyonesse : and other Poems* ; those on Ford and Webster are from a striking series on the Elizabethan dramatists in the same volume, and are inscriptions in presentation copies of the old dramatists to Mr. Watts. From the same series are Nos. ccxiii. and ccxiv.—the latter, in my opinion, one of the poet's finest sonnet-utterances. Those who have not read Mr. Swinburne's later volumes, may be said to be absolutely ignorant of the real nature of his genius and his work. About half-a-dozen erotic poems, literary exercises of an imitative kind, gave him the reputation of a poet "without a conscience or an aim." This reputation clings to him still—if not in England, in America and the colonies, where English criticism of English writers permeates with a slowness that is altogether unaccountable. Posterity, however, having only the poet's work to judge from, finding there a few score lines of questionable erotics scattered through a vast mass of poetry, displaying (if one may speak from the purely artistic standpoint) only too much "conscience and aim," will be strangely puzzled on reading such contemporary criticisms of his poetry as may survive. To go no farther back than the last seven years of the poet's life—years spent much out of London, partly "beneath the trees of leafy Surrey," partly in Wiltshire, and partly in Guernsey and Sark—he has, during that time, written nothing but poetry dealing with the noblest aspirations, the most exalted enthusiasms, and the purest passions of men. Upon his views of the Irish question, as set forth in a much discussed political lyric of recent publication, I have nothing to say, save that they are not "new," as so many have supposed. He formulated them in the *Rappel* three years ago. They are views he has always shared with Mazzini, Karl Blind, and others among his friends.

Nos. ccxvi.-ccxxi. JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS. Mr. J. A. Symonds' wide reputation as a broad and sympathetic critic—indeed, as one of the two or three really eminent critics among us—and as a writer of beautiful and powerful prose, has overshadowed his claims to the place among the poets of the day which is his due. He has written a large number of sonnets, and one of his latest books—*Vagabunduli Libellus*—consists of poems in this form only. His sonnets are unequal, partly owing to his fondness for writing sonnet-sequences—a great mistake in nine cases out of ten. That Mr. Symonds is a true poet, a poet of generally high standing, no one will be prepared to deny after perusal of his verse. The author of that eminently critical, fascinating, picturesquely, yet learnedly and carefully written *magnum opus*, *The History of the Renaissance in Italy*, has so great a power over words that his natural tendency, even in verse, is to let himself be carried away by them. Some of his later sonnets are very markedly of Shakespearian inspiration. Those I have quoted seem to me to form the best representative selection that could be made, exhibiting as they do Mr. Symonds' range. The contrast between the sombre ccxviii. and the glowing ccxx. is very striking. The following (which, like each of the foregoing, with the exception of No. ccxv., is from *Vagabunduli Libellus*) is interesting on account of its being constructed upon only three rhymes, *ire, eeze, ark* :—

IN BLACK AND WHITE : WINTER ETCHINGS.

I.—*The Chorister.*

Snow on the high-pitched minister roof and spire :
 Snow on the boughs of leafless linden trees :
 Snow on the silent streets and squares that freeze.
 Under night's wing down-drooping nigh and nigher.
 Inside the church, within the shadowy choir,
 Dim burn the lamps like lights on vaporous seas ;
 Drowsed are the voices of droned litanies ;
 Blurred as in dreams the face of priest and friar.
 Cold hath numbed sense to slumber here ! But hark,
 One swift soprano, soaring like a lark,
 Startles the stillness ; throbs that soul of fire,
 Beats around arch and aisle, floods echoing dark
 With exquisite aspiration ; higher, higher,
 Yearns in sharp anguish of untold desire.

NOTE.—(Referred to on page xlii. of Introductory Essay.) Reference was made in the Introduction to a sonnet where the first three lines rhyme, and therewith also the fifth, sixth, and seventh : there are, as already stated, one or two sonnets in French so constructed, but the following is, so far as I know, the only example of the kind in English ;—

THE MANSIONS OF THE BLEST.

One, who through waiting years of patient pain
 Had lived in heavenly hope—of Death full fain—
 Yea, who unto Death had prayed, had prayed in vain,

At last was lowered into the dark deep grave :
 But could the cold moist earth the soul restrain ?
 Could death perpetuate his usurping reign ?
 Nay, with a joyous, an adoring strain

The glad soul mounted from that narrow cave.

How awful was the silence of the sky !

How terrible the emptiness of space !

O for a voice, a touch, a shadowy face !

Only the cold stars glittered icily,

And of the promised pathway was no trace :—

A sun-suck'd dewdrop, Immortality !

NOS. ccxxii.-ccxxiii. LORD TENNYSON. The Poet-Laureate has written few sonnets of recent years, but whether old or new, he has done nothing of this kind superior to his powerful *Montenegro*. The other fine sonnet which I quote is one of his earliest.

If it were structurally more satisfactory, and if it had not the fatal flaw of a repetition of "thee" as a terminal, the following sonnet, though irregular, would probably take rank even above *Montenegro* :—

But were I loved, as I desire to be,

What is there in the great sphere of the earth,

And range of evil between death and birth,

That I should fear,—if I were loved by thee !

All the inner, all the outer world of pain

Clear Love would pierce and cleave, if thou wert mine,

As I have heard that, somewhere in the main,

Fresh-water springs come up through bitter brine.

'Twere joy, not fear, clasped hand in hand with thee,

To wait for death—mute—careless of all ills,

Apart upon a mountain, though the surge

Of some new deluge from a thousand hills

Flung leagues of roaring foam into the gorge

Below us, as far on as eye could see.

NO. ccxxiv. JAMES THOMSON (1834-1882). There is no sadder story in the annals of literature—where sad stories are only too easily to be found—than that of poor James Thomson. Mr. Philip Marston and myself were the last of his acquaintances who saw him alive, and neither of us is likely ever to forget the pathetically tragic circumstances of his end. As time goes on *The City of Dreadful Night* will more and more be considered a truly remarkable poem. It has the distinction of being the most hopelessly sad poem in

literature. Much of Thomson's other work is characterised by equally high qualities—one or two of the shorter poems by even greater technical skill, if not exceeding it in power of sombre imagination. He stands quite by himself—following no leader, belonging to no school: to De Quincey, however, he has strong affinities. In Mr. Philip Marston's words (*Athenæum*)—"In time to come the critic of these years will look back wonderingly upon the figure of the somewhat solitary poet who belonged to no special community or brotherhood in art." The following *In Memoriam* sonnet by Mr. Marston will be admired and understood even by those who have not read *The City of Dreadful Night*:—

No tears of mine shall fall upon thy face;
 Whatever city thou hast reached at last,
 Better it is than that where thy feet passed
 So many times, such weary nights and days.
 Thy journeying feet knew all its inmost ways,
 Where shapes and shadows of dread things were cast:
 There moved thy soul profoundly dark and vast,
 There did thy voice its song of anguish raise.
 Thou would'st have left that city of great night,
 Yet travelled its dark mazes all in vain:
 But one way leads from it, which found aright,
 Who quitteth it shall not come back again.
 There didst thou grope thy way through thy long pain:
 Hast thou outside found any world of light?

No. ccxxv. REV. R. A. THORPE. Of this writer I have no particulars: nor do I even know if he be still alive. His sonnet I found in Housman's now scarce collection (1835).

Nos. ccxxvi. ccxxvii. LORD THURLOW (1781-1829). Lord Thurlow never made any impression on the public at large. A few eminent judges, Lamb, Dyce, and others, genuinely admired some of his work. Concerning No. ccxxv., Archbishop Trench has written that it is "a sonnet of stately and thoughtful beauty—one which no anthology of English sonnets ought henceforward ever to omit."

Nos. ccxxviii.-ccxxx. JOHN TODHUNTER, M.D. Dr. Todhunter has written some excellent sonnets. They are mostly to be found in his *Laurella: and other Poems*, and *Forest Songs*.

No. ccxxxi. RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH. Since these Notes were first printed, English literature has sustained a loss in the death of Archbishop Trench. His poetry is deservedly popular with a wide section of English readers. Some of his sonnets are very fine.

No. ccxxxii. F. HERBERT TRENCH. Mr. F. H. Trench is a nephew of the late Archbishop of Dublin. What verse of his I have seen has considerable promise.

TUPPER, MARTIN. It is, I fancy, generally supposed that Mr. Tupper has written no verse except his famous and once widely read *Proverbial Philosophy*; this, however, is a mistake. In 1860 he published a volume containing 300 sonnets. From a series that appeared in *The Dublin University Magazine*, vol. lii., 1858, I may quote:—

THE BRECKNOCK BEACONS.

O glorious sea of mountains in a storm,
 Joyously surging, and careering high
 With angry crests flung up against the sky
 And billowy troughs between, that roll enorm—
 For miles of desolate grandeur scoop'd out deep—
 Yet all congeal'd and magically asleep
 As on a sudden stopt to this fixt form
 By "Peace, be still!"—well may the film'd eye
 Of Ignorance here behold in cloudy robe
 The mythologic Arthur on his throne
 A Spiritual King, sublime, alone,
 Marshalling tempests over half the globe,
 Or, kindlier now by summer zephyrs fann'd
 Blessing invisibly his ancient land.

Nos. ccxxxiii.-ccxxxvii. CHARLES TENNYSON-TURNER (1808-1879). The late Vicar of Grasby was the second of the three eldest Tennyson brothers, Frederick, Charles, and Alfred. While still in his twenties, he assumed his grandmother's name, Turner, and henceforth became known by that name, round which he has cast "an abiding light." In 1827 he and his brother Alfred jointly published the now very scarce *Poems by Two Brothers*. In 1830 he published on his own account the slim little volume entitled *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces*. Although thirty-four years elapsed before another volume was issued, Mr. Tennyson-Turner's reputation—at best confined to a very select circle—suffered no diminution, a remarkable proof of the poetic value of what his thin little book contained. Recently his collected sonnets, with a memoir and other interesting matter, have been issued by Messrs. Macmillan & Co., to whose courtesy I am indebted for permission to print the sonnets I have selected. These beautiful poems speak more eloquently than any words of mine for their author's claim to one of the highest places among nineteenth century sonnet-writers.

No. ccxxxvi. Coleridge, who was much pleased with this sonnet as a whole, proposed instead of ll. 10-12—

“To that lone Sound mute listener and alone—
And yet a Sound of Commune, strongly thrown,
That meets the Pine-Grove on the cliffs above.”

He also proposed to delete “fond” in the fourteenth line, probably regarding it not only as a useless extra syllable, but as doubly unnecessary through being implied in “love.”

Nos. ccxxxviii-ix. [†]SAMUEL WADDINGTON. I have already had occasion to refer to Mr. Waddington and his two pleasant little sonnet anthologies. A year or so ago he published a daintily got up collection of his own sonnets and miscellaneous poems, whence I extracted the two I have quoted. These effectually prove that Mr. Waddington can compose in as well as write about his favourite poetic form.

Nos. ccxl.-ccxli. WILLIAM WATSON. Mr. William Watson is a young poet who a few years ago published a volume of verse entitled *The Prince's Quest*, which, though strongly derivative, is full of fine things. My attention was first drawn to it by the late D. G. Rossetti, whose copy, with several markings and marginalia, I afterwards came to possess. The following striking lines were marked by him as specially excellent:—

“About him was a ruinous fair place,
Which Time, who still delighteth to abase
The highest, and throw down what men do build,
With splendid prideful barrenness had filled,
And dust of immemorial dreams, and breath
Of silence, which is next of kin to death.
A weedy wilderness it seemed, that was
In days forepast a garden, but the grass
Grew now where once the flowers, and hard by
A many-throated fountain had run dry
Which erst all day a web of rainbows wove
Out of the body of the sun its love.
And but a furlong's space beyond, there towered
In midstmost of that silent realm deflowered
A palace builded of black marble, whence
The shadow of a swart magnificence
Falling, upon the outer space begot
A dream of darkness where the night was not.”

Since *The Prince's Quest* Mr. Watson has published a little volume of Epigrams, many of which are very pleasing. His strongest work as yet, however, is to be found in the series of political sonnets which in 1885 appeared in the *National Review*, under the title *Ver Tenebrosum*. These are meant to be read in sequence, but I may quote two of them:—

REPORTED CONCESSIONS.

So we must palter, falter, cringe and shrink,
 And when the bully threatens, crouch or fly.—
 There are who tell me with a shuddering eye
 That war's red cup is Satan's chosen drink.
 Who shall gainsay them? Verily I do think
 War is as hateful almost, and well-nigh
 As ghastly, as the terrible Peace whereby
 We halt for ever on the crater's brink
 And feed the wind with phrases, while we know .
 There gapes at hand the infernal precipice
 O'er which a gossamer bridge of words we throw,
 Yet cannot chose but hear from the abyss
 The sulphurous gloom's unfathomable hiss
 And simmering lava's subterranean flow.

NIGHTMARE.

(*Written during apparent imminence of War.*)

In a false dream I saw the Foe prevail.
 The war was ended; the last smoke had rolled
 Away; and we, erewhile the strong and bold,
 Stood broken, humbled, withered, weak and pale,
 And mourned, "Our greatness is become a tale
 To tell our children's babes when we are old.
 They shall put by their playthings to be told
 How England once, before the years of bale,
 Throned above trembling, puissant, grandiose, calm,
 Held Asia's richest jewel in her palm;
 And with unnumbered isles barbaric she
 The broad hem of her glistening hem impearl'd;
 Then when she wound her arms about the world,
 And had for vassal the obsequious sea."

Nos. ccxlii.-vii. THEODORE WATTS. Mr. Theodore Watts occupies an unique place in the present world of letters. Few men have ever gained so wide and genuine a reputation without having been much more before the public. As the "friend of friends" of the late Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and as standing in equally close relationship to one of the most eminent of living poets, it is all the more remarkable how absolutely he has retained his own individuality. He has published several noteworthy signed articles upon poetry, among them a most able paper called "Physiognomic Poetry," which appeared in the *New Quarterly*, and articles upon Rossetti in *The Nineteenth Century* and in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; but it is chiefly upon his admirable critical views in *The Athenæum* that his wide and growing reputation is based. Lately he contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* a brilliant treatise upon "Poetry," characterised by that searching critical faculty,

insight, and illustrative power which render his anonymous papers so attractive. To all lovers of sonnet-literature, and especially to admirers of Mr. Watts' sonnets, it is pleasant to learn that probably he will soon issue his numerous already-published sonnets with many others in volume form.

Many of Mr. Watts' sonnets have appeared in *The Athenæum*. Three of them—*Natura Benigna*, *Natura Maligna*, and "The Dream"—are taken from the powerful romance of *Aylwin*, whence also is excerpted the following sonnet, "The Rosy Scar." It alludes, the author tells us, to a legend among the *Fratres Roris Cocti* (embodied in an old Latin poem published at Leipzig), to the effect that on Christmas Eve, Father Rosenkreutz returns to earth in the form of a "rosy phantom," and may be seen, "sometimes on a mountain peak, sometimes on a tower of a cathedral, sometimes walking along the waves of the sea, watching the rosy cross break through the sky on a Christmas morning;" and the sonnet describes some Christians labouring on board a Moslem slave-ship, unhappy slaves to whom "on a certain Christmas Eve the 'beneficent phantom' appeared, and reminded them of the Father's great teaching, that to 'suffer on earth is but to borrow the Rosy Scar of Christ.'"

THE ROSY SCAR.

While Night's dark horses waited for the wind,
He stood—he shone—where Sunset's fiery glaives
Flickered behind the clouds; then, o'er the waves,
He came to us, Faith's remnant sorrow-thinned.
The Paynim sailors clustering, tawny-skinned,
Cried "Who is he that comes to Christian slaves?
Nor water-sprite nor jinni of sunset-caves,
The rosy phantom stands, nor winged nor finned!"

All night he stood till shone the Christmas-star;
Slowly the Rosy Cross, streak after streak,
Flushed the grey sky—flushed sea and sail and spar,
Flushed—blessing—every slave's woe-wasted cheek,
Then did great Rosenkreutz, the Dew-King, speak:
"Sufferers, take heart, Christ lends the Rosy Scar."

Several of them (notably "Foreshadowings" and the two "Nature" sonnets) have attracted wide notice and much comment. It was natural that the work of one who is generally regarded as our most thorough critic of contemporary poetic literature should be subjected to exceptional scrutiny and comparison, and while some of Mr. Watts' sonnets do not seem to be wholly satisfactory (for my own part, I refer to those which are *pièces d'occasion*, such as that addressed to Mrs. Garfield, and others of like description), the majority are really noteworthy productions. Elision, which can be such a "lift" to a fine line, is much favoured by Mr. Watts;

indeed, it threatens to become a mannerism with this writer : there are very few of his published sonnets without its occurrence somewhere.

Those which I have selected seem to me to represent their author at his best ; they are certainly powerful and imaginative sonnets, flawless in form, and altogether the productions of a poet of high order. Possibly there are others of Mr. Watts' which may be finer, but those which I have chosen are those which most appeal to me.

"The First Kiss" and "The Heaven that Was" are, by the courtesy of the author, printed here for the first time. I must find space for the following :—

A TALK ON WATERLOO BRIDGE.

(*A Reminiscence.*)

We talked of "Children of the Open Air,"
 Who once in Orient valleys lived aloof,
 Loving the sun, the wind, the sweet reproof
 Of storms, and all that makes the fair earth fair,
 Till, on a day, across the mystic bar
 Of moonrise, came the "Children of the Roof,"
 Who find no balm 'neath evening's rosiest woof
 Nor dew of peace beneath the Morning Star.

We looked o'er London where men wither and choke,
 Roofed in, poor souls, renouncing stars and skies,
 And lore of woods and wild wind-prophecies—
 Yea, every voice that to their fathers spoke :
 And sweet it seemed to die ere bricks and smoke
 Leave never a meadow outside Paradise.

This sonnet is printed at the close of the second of two papers which appeared in *The Athenæum* in the autumn of 1881, under the signature of Mr. Watts, entitled *Reminiscences of George Borrow*. They form as brilliant and fascinating a chapter of biography as has been given us by any writer of our time. Mr. Watts was, during the later years of "Lavengro's" life, an intimate friend of his ; though the acquaintanceship began during the former's boyhood—curiously enough, while the two were swimming (as yet all unknown to each other) in the rough seas off the Yarmouth coast. As the concluding sentences of these reminiscences are in close connection with the sonnet here given, I append them. "The last time I ever saw him (Borrow) was shortly before he left London to live in the country. It was, I remember well, on Waterloo Bridge, where I had stopped to gaze at a sunset of singular and striking splendour, whose gorgeous clouds and ruddy mists were reeling and boiling over the West-end. Borrow came up and stood leaning over the parapet, entranced by the sight, as well he might be. Like most people

born in flat districts, he had a passion for sunsets. Turner could not have painted that one, I think, and certainly my pen could not describe it; for the London smoke was flushed by the sinking sun and had lost its dunness, and, reddening every moment as it rose above the roofs, steeples, and towers, it went curling round the sinking sun in a rosy vapour, leaving, however, just a segment of a golden rim, which gleamed as dazzlingly as in the thinnest and clearest air—a peculiar effect which struck Borrow deeply. I never saw such a sunset before or since, not even on Waterloo Bridge; and from its association with ‘the last of Borrow,’ I shall never forget it.”

No. ccxlviii. AUGUSTA WEBSTER. Mrs. Augusta Webster comes second to Robert Browning as a dramatic poet, among living writers. From her earliest book down to her latest, the very beautiful *In a Day*, she has shown a mental vigour—a poetic power and insight—to which it may be doubted if justice has been ever fully done, notwithstanding the high reputation in which Mrs. Webster is undoubtedly held. She has written very few sonnets, and the form does not seem natural to her. “The Brook Rhine” is distinctly her best.

No. ccxlix. JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE (1775-1841). Blanco White owes an enduring fame to a single sonnet—but this sonnet is one of the noblest in any language. There is quite a “Blanco White” literature concerning the famous fourteen lines headed *Night and Death*. It is strange that the man who wrote this should do nothing else of any importance, and its composition must either have been a magnificent accident or the outcome of a not very powerful poetic impulse coming unexpectedly and in a moment to white heat, and therein exhausting itself for ever. Coleridge spoke of it as “the finest and most grandly conceived sonnet in our language;” and, later, Leigh Hunt wrote that, in point of thought, it “stands supreme, perhaps, above all in any language: nor can we ponder it too deeply, or with too hopeful a reverence.” I may refer those who wish for further particulars to the interesting notes compiled by Mr. Main (*Treasury of English Sonnets*). From these notes I excerpt an earlier reading of this famous sonnet, which Mr. Main obtained from the Rev. Dean R. Percival Graves, of Dublin, who, some fifty years ago, copied it either from an autograph or from an early printed copy.

Mysterious Night! when the first man but knew
Thee by report, unseen, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of Light and Blue?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the Host of Heaven came,
And lo! creation widened on his view!

Who could have thought what darkness lay concealed
 Within thy beams, O Sun? or who could find,
 Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
 That to such endless Orbs thou mad'st us blind?
 Weak man! why to shun death this anxious strife?
 If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?

I have ventured on an important alteration of the accepted text, an alteration which every commentator has yearned to make—or *ought* to have so yearned. This is the substitution of “flow’r” for “fly” in the 11th line. Even if White did *not* write “flow’r,” we may at least credit him with the intention of doing so. The earliest known appearance of *Night and Death* is in the *Bijou* (Pickering) 1828; the next, in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* for May, 1835.

No. ccl. HENRY KIRKE WHITE (1785-1806). The star of Kirke White’s reputation has waned considerably of recent years. His poetry is certainly not calculated to withstand the stress of time.

No. ccli. CHARLES WHITEHEAD (1804-1862). Whitehead was and is best known through his novel *Richard Savage*. The fine sonnet which I have quoted is as Whitehead really wrote it: the finer version in Mr. Caine’s anthology was taken down to Rossetti’s dictation. It had long been a favourite with Rossetti, and it gained greatly by passing through the poetic atmosphere of his mind. All interested in Whitehead as a man and a writer, and in the tragic story of his life, should read Mr. Mackenzie Bell’s monograph—*A Forgotten Genius* (Fisher Unwin, 1885).

No. cclii. WILLIAM HENRY WHITWORTH. Mr. Whitworth was a head-master in a large public school. Mr Housman had a great admiration for his sonnets, and printed several of them in his anthology.

No. ccliii. OSCAR WILDE. Mr. Oscar Wilde has written some excellent sonnets. No. ccliii. appears in his *Poems*.

No. ccliv. JOHN WILSON (“Christopher North”). I am glad to be now able to print Christopher North’s fine sonnet, “The Evening Cloud,” with which I became acquainted too late for its insertion in the previous editions of this book.

No. cclv. The REV. RICHARD WILTON is the author of three volumes of finely contemplative and religious verse—*Wood-Notes and Church-Bells* (Bell & Daldy, 1873), *Lyrics, Sylvan and Sacred* (George Bell & Sons, 1878), and *Sungleams; Rondeaux and Sonnets*. “Frosted Trees” is excerpted from *Sungleams*. From *Wood-Notes* I have pleasure in quoting a sonnet founded on a passage in one of Archbishop Trench’s poems.

THE VOICE AT EVENTIDE.

Hush'd was the music of the Sabbath-bell ;
 The twilight anthem of the birds was still,
 Which late they warbled at their own sweet will ;
 When on mine ear a soothing murmur fell.
 Borne on the evening breeze it seemed to swell
 And wander fitfully from hill to hill,
 And with its gracious harmony to fill
 The grassy hollow of the listening dell.
 That murmur was "the sound of many waters,"
 Fall below fall—more sweet than note of bird,
 Or Sabbath chime, or song of loving daughters,
 Or any melody by mortals heard :
 For it was Nature's symbol of the Voice,
 Which when it speaks makes highest heaven rejoice !

Nos. cclvi.-cclvii. JAMES CHAPMAN WOODS. These imaginative sonnets are printed in Mr. Wood's *A Child of the People : and other Poems*, a volume of poetry which attracted much less attention than it indubitably deserved.

Nos. cclviii.-cclxx. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850). Some of the noblest work of one of the greatest of English poets is enshrined in Wordsworth's sonnets. In these it was comparatively rare that he "walked on all fours," to use Sir Walter Scott's phrase, for in them he was wont to express with a conciseness and dignity, a lucidity and poetic fervour, many of his finest conceptions and most clearly defined thoughts. Every good sonnet of Wordsworth's is like a mirror wherein we see his poetic nature reflected ; and is there another man who would so well stand the test of such a multitude of mirrors ? His fatal habit of rhyming upon everything resulted, in his sonnet-work, in the many more or less indifferent productions to be found in the "Duddon," and more especially in the Ecclesiastical Series : but speaking generally, his sonnets are freer from his besetting sins than one would naturally expect. He is, and must always be, considered one of the greatest of English sonneteers. At his very best he is *the* greatest. His sonnets are mostly as beautiful and limpid as an amber-tinted stream, and the thoughts which are their motives as clear as the large pebbly stones in the shallows thereof. In a word, he, at his best, knew what he wanted to say, and could say it in his own manner supremely well. In selecting thirteen of what seem to me Wordsworth's very finest sonnets (not altogether an easy matter), I have allowed personal preference to bias me whenever critical estimates were closely balanced.







~~ENDING~~ ...

APR 27 1983

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